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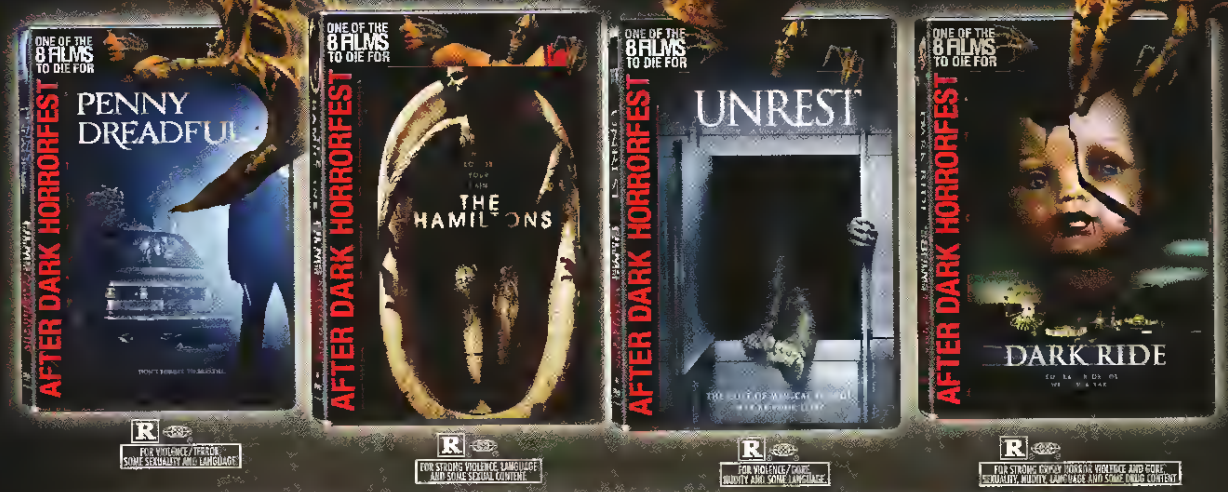
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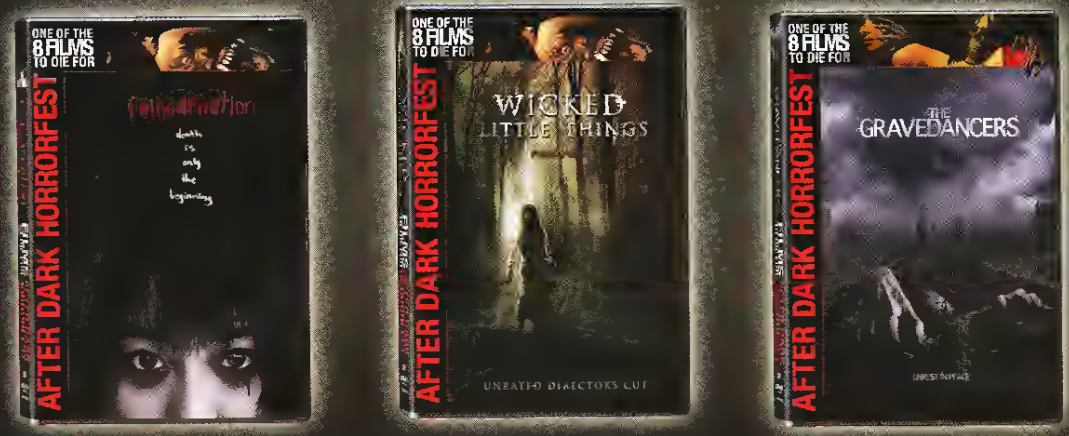


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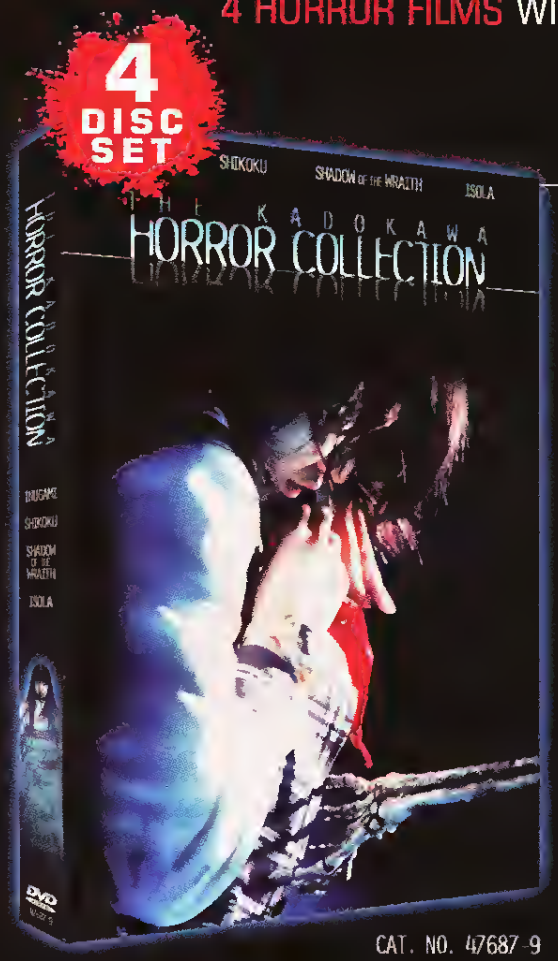
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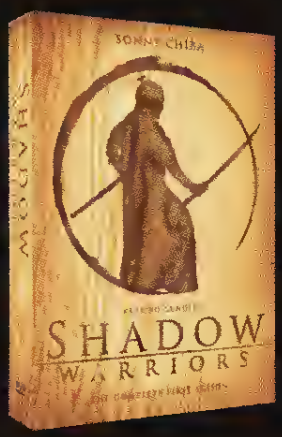
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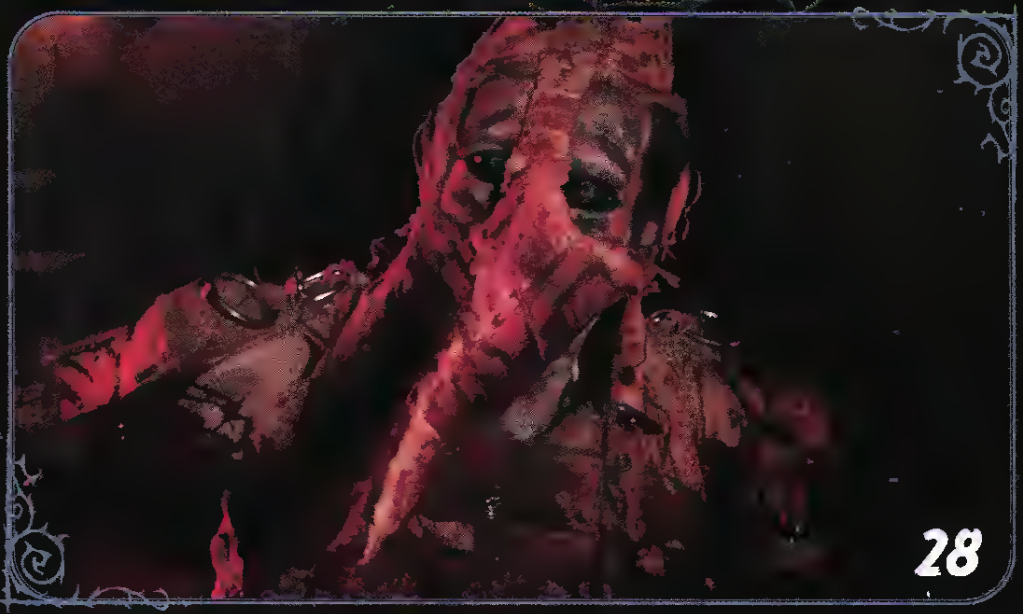
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SEX, VIOLENCE AND 42ND ST. 16
Rue Morgue examines grindhouse ground zero, the seedy, sensational source of the movement, plus the upcoming Quentin Tarantino/Robert Rodriguez double bill that pays homage to it. Interviews with Rodriguez, Kurt Russell, Tom Savini, Rob Zombie, Eli Roth and Edgar Wright. Plus: William Lustig remembers 42nd Street, H.G. Lewis on making exploitation films, and more!
by **Stephen Thrower, Jovanka Vuckovic, Tom Murray, Dave Alexander, Paul Corupe, Last Chance Lance** and **H.G. Lewis**

SKINNY PUPPY: 25 YEARS OF AURAL VIOLENCE 28
This year, the harbingers of dark industrial music celebrate their silver anniversary. cEvin Key and Ogre speak! Plus: Skinny Puppy's 25 most terrifying tracks.
by **Chris Alexander** and **Liisa Ladouceur**

CARNIVAL MACABRE 34
Welcome to Pooch Island, a cartoonish, monster-packed, acrylic thrill ride.
by **Kirsten Anderson**

LOVE WILL TEAR US APART 38
Lucky McKee and Angela Bettis trade director and actor roles for their latest collaboration, Roman.
by **John W. Bowen**

NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND 6
Grindhouses.

POST-MORTEM 7
Letters from fans, readers and weirdos.

DREADLINES 8
News highlights, horror happenings.

THE CORONER'S REPORT 12
Weird stats and morbid facts.

NEEDFUL THINGS 14
Strange trinkets from our bazaar of the bizarre.

CINEMACABRE 40
The latest films, the newest DVDs and reissues.

SCHIZOID CINEPHILE 60
Spotlight: Coralina Cataldi Tassoni, part 2.

BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS 62
The horror comic book gospel.

THE NINTH CIRCLE 65
Spotlight: James Farr's Xombie: Dead on Arrival.

TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR 70
The Edogawa Rampo House – Tokyo, Japan.

THE GORE-MET 72
Menu: Three retro video cheapies.

AUDIO DROME 75
Spotlight: Monster movie music soundtracks.

PLAY DEAD 78
New and upcoming games.

CLASSIC CUT 82
Herschell Gordon Lewis' Blood Feast.

April 2007 Issue #66

Note From Underground



Looking over this whopping twelve-page cover story on the grindhouse phenomenon, I was struck by the fact that I was still being nursed in 1975, when moviegoers were experiencing bona fide exploitation double bills in the seediest theatres of New York's notorious 42nd Street. What a thrill it must have been to see movies such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Last House on the Left*, *The Astro-Zombies*, *The Blood Spattered Bride*, *Torso*, *The House at the Edge of the Park*, *Shockwaves*, *Burial Ground*, *Pieces*, *Blood Feast*, *I Drink Your Blood* and *Blood Eaters* in their first run at some shithole theatre with a rowdy crowd of drunks, perverts and other miscreants.

But these venues are a thing of the past, snuffed out by the advent of home video, urban gentrification and generic mainstream multiplexes. Granted, there are a few grindhouse ghosts gasping for air here and there, like the New Beverly Cinema in LA, which has been featuring continuous repertory programming since 1978. Then there's the Alamo Draft House in Austin, Texas. I've attended Harry Knowles' Butt-Numb-A-Thon as well as the Phantasm and Savini Fests back in 2000. In all cases, we were treated to a ton of films screened back-to-back 'til the sun came up, with awesome trailers for exploitation films like *Dolemite*, *Dr. Butcher, M.D.*, *Blacula* and *Cannibal Ferox* in between. And the best part was that you could drink booze, eat tacos and scream at the screen with a theatre packed full of like-minded cinephiles.

For those of you living in our hometown, you're likely aware of our monthly CineMacabre movie nights at the Bloor Cinema, an old rep theatre here in Toronto – one of the last in the city. No multiplex would have us, nor would we have any interest in screening any of the cult films we feature in places like that. It would defeat the purpose of the evenings, which are partly in tribute to grindhouses past – to sort of revive the experience for our attendees, many of whom were too young to have had a chance to experience it first hand. For them, the video stores were the new grindhouses. The walls of outrageous covers became a giant marquee of titles to take home to have their own marathons of sleazy, gore-filled programming. But it just isn't the same. So we take to the Beverly, the Draft House and the Bloor, to fulfill a compelling desire to know what cult movie-going was once was like.

This issue, we've included a lengthy essay on grindhouse history and even sat down with Bill Lustig, director of the nasty exploitation gem *Maniac*, for a first-hand look back. He's a living artifact of that time, a New York native and one-time denizen of 42nd Street. His low-budget serial killer-on-the-loose movie was once proudly featured on a marquee in Times Square back when it was still saturated with hookers, drugs and all kinds of crime.

For me, *Maniac* is the perfect example of a true grindhouse film. Its sensationally blunt title was deliberately chosen to put asses in seats, much like its poster, which featured the lower half of the maniac's body (bulging hard-on and all) holding a bloody knife in one hand and a bloody scalp in the other. And unlike many of the exploitation films that preceded it, *Maniac* delivered on its poster's promise with unparalled violence, which incensed feminists and critics alike, who lambasted it as immoral and unwatchable trash. Now that's an exploitation movie!

When we look back on these films, it's no wonder filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez are so obsessed with trying to recapture the '70s. It was a time of freedom, when cheap was charming and excess was essential. It was there, in the dark, dirty womb of the grindhouse, that the 1970s exploitation film bellowed its blustering birth cry. The rest is, of course, history.

JV

jovanka@rue-morgue.com

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

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MARRS MEDIA INC.
2926 DUNDAS STREET WEST
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P: 416 651.9675 F: 416 651 6085
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PUBLISHER
RODRIGO GUDIÑO
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
JOVANKA VUCKOVIC
MANAGING EDITOR
DAVE ALEXANDER
ASSOCIATE EDITOR/WEBMISTRESS
MONICA S. KUEBLER
ART DIRECTOR
GARY PULLIN
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
BRETT BAKKER
COPY EDITOR
LIISA LADOUCEUR

CONTRIBUTORS
CHRIS ALEXANDER
DEBORAH ALLISON
KIRSTEN ANDERSON
JOHN W. BOWEN
GARY BUTLER
KEITH CARMAN
KYLE CASSIDY
PAUL CORUPE
GEMMA FILES
JAMES FISHER
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LAST CHANCE LANCE
ANDREW LEE
HERSHELL GORDON LEWIS
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TOM MURRAY
MARK MOYES
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OFFICE MANAGER
AUDRA BUTERA
INTERNS
CLAIRE HORSNELL
BOB BARROW
FINANCIAL CONTROLLER
MARCO PECOTA
MARKETING/ADVERTISING MANAGER
JODY INFURNARI
PH. 905-985-0430 FX: 905-985 4195 E: jody@rue-morgue.com

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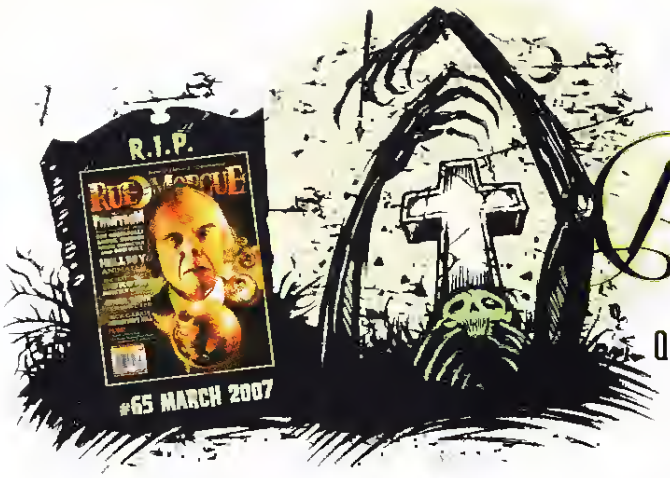
RM#66 is dedicated to Isabella McKenzie Vuckovic.

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Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

THAT IS ONE SPECTACULARLY vivid *Rue Morgue* cover! Can't wait to see it glaring out from our local magazine racks. It'll change the whole ambience at magazine-selling bookstores like Borders and Barnes & Noble. I dread to think of the street accidents it may cause near the huge outdoor magazine stands in Hollywood, Studio City, etc. as cars screech to a halt, their drivers mesmerized by the cover's pyrotechnical reds, oranges and yellows exploding out at them. P.S. the Tall Man has asked me to print out copies which he plans to send to the top fashion designers in hope they'll ask him to walk down their runways next season. Your cover proves he can scowl as sourly as any of their current models. He'll also submit a copy to *People*, who annually enrage him by renominating George Clooney and Brad Pitt as "World's Sexiest Man," ignoring the screen's one real Adonis. (He said it, I didn't.)

Angus Scrimm – Hollywood, California

CONGRATULATIONS on another great issue, your publication has always been great but truly seems to be flourishing under Jovanka's editorship. The article on *Phantasm* was fantastic, this movie nearly traumatized me when I first saw it over 25 years ago and holds a pleasantly corrosive grip on my psyche to this day (your comments on its use of dream logic and general dream-like quality truly struck a chord with this still-uneasy Phan). I had the pleasure of meeting Reggie Bannister at Cinema Wasteland a few years ago, and while it was abundantly obvious that he was running late for a speaking engagement he took the time to chat, sign autographs and take pictures with a long-time fan without seeming remotely put out. In addition to being a talented and versatile actor, he is a class act and one of the true "good guys" in the genre. P.S. Please consider putting the Audio Drome spotlight on the grandfather of horror rock, the mighty Roky Erickson!

Mike O'Leary – Medina, Ohio

I WOULD LIKE TO tell of my excitement as I opened my mailer and saw the Tall Man peering at me from the cover! It's great to finally have a US release of *Phantasm III*! A sphere box set would be even better. Now to the *Phantasm* mythos. Jebediah Morningside found the gateway to another dimension – is he the great great-grandfather of Jody and Mike? How does Reggie fit into the mythos? Did we not see him die at the hands of the lavender lady/Tall Man?

Lisa Flippin – Phoenix, Arizona

THE VARIETY OF COVERAGE in *RM#64* was simply perfect – a balance between the new and the old, the gory and the subtly terrifying, the mainstream and the obscure. I particularly loved the K-Horror and the "Silent Screams" features, both of which were quite well researched and executed. I'm mightily impressed by the quality and variety of genre journalism that you display. As the horror genre becomes more and more mainstream, it's comforting to know that a publication like *Rue Morgue* exists to set us all straight on our sometimes too lofty expectations.

Matthew D. Hill – address withheld

EVERY TIME I OPEN a new issue of *Rue Morgue*, the first item I turn to is the hilarious Disfigures of Speech by J.W. Fish R. His images of everyday sayings get my gut rumbling so hard with laughter I give myself an involuntary C-section every time I peek at them. My infatuation with these satirical comics has quickly grown into an obsession where I am starting to make colour photo copies (it'd be sacrilegious to cut up the magazine!) of the illustrations that will one day make up the wallpaper of my room. I thank you kindly *Rue Morgue* and J.W. Fish R. from the heart of my bottom for your work in the horror culture. Hopefully one day I could see "Tying the Knot" in your bloodstained pages?

Nick Kirschner – Seattle, Washington

I HAVE JUST BEGUN to read your magazine, my first issue (*RM#59*), I picked up in Canada and I couldn't put it down. Unfortunately I live in the England and am unable to pick your magazines up in my local newsagents or magazine stores. Help?

Chris Hill – Kent, England

Rue Morgue *is available in the UK from Fabpress.com and at various bookstores. You can demand your local bookstore to carry it or subscribe and have it delivered to your mailbox every month. – Ed.*

I BELIEVE THAT Rue Morgue Radio's critics were suffering from some type of mental disorder when they reviewed the piece of garbage better known as *Let's Scare Jessica To Death*. After hearing their orgasmic review, I immediately ordered this cinematic torture. I think the only problem with Jessica is that she is either retarded or just a horrible actress that should be put to sleep like a lame horse! I also think that I'd rather stick a nail through my dickhole than sit through this plotless mess! Did RM Radio's critics get paid extra to plug this piece of '70s trash that should have never been transferred to DVD in the first place? Somebody owes me fifteen bucks, dammit!

Luis Lazaro – Orange County, California

LATELY I HAVE BEEN very disappointed with your magazine. I understand you raising the price, that is not why I am writing you. I am writing about what the influence of advertising does to the process of review. I have noticed that if a production takes out an ad, it gets a good review. As of your reviews of *The Descent* and *Bone Sickness* and many more examples which I will not bore you with. I have stopped reading your magazine and gone back to *Deep Red* and *Fangoria*. You have to understand that a lot of your readers are blue-collar workers and the $8 cover price is equal to two hours of hard work for minimum wage after taxes. After reading your review of *The Descent*, me and my friend hurried to see it and could not believe that you did a front page spread on it! We no longer consider your reviews to have any veracity in an objective manner or any other manner for that matter. So, with this said, why should I buy something you review? And most unfortunate of all, why should I buy your magazine when I can get the same review from the back of the DVD box?

"Hatemail" – address withheld

To clarify, we haven't raised our cover price in three years. You should also know that Deep Red *is no longer publishing and* Fangoria *sells at a slightly higher price of $8.99 US/$10.99 Canada. Also, we do not practice "advertorial." Please read Note From Underground,* RM#58 *regarding the very issue you're complaining about, for our position on that matter. – Ed.*

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to info@rue-morgue.com or:

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Dreadlines

News Highlights Horror Happenings

Mondo Macabro produces first Pakistani gore film

The goriest film ever to emerge from Pakistan is coming soon from Mondo Macabro. Known primarily for releasing the weirdest cult classics from around the world, the UK-based DVD label will unleash its first theatrical feature, *Zibahkhana* (English title: *Hell's Ground*). The South Asian-shot zombie picture, directed by Omar Ali Khan, is being touted as Pakistan's first modern-day horror film.

"*Zibahkhana* is a bloodstained love letter to the horror movies I grew up worshipping," Khan tells *Rue Morgue* from his home in Islamabad. "It's a rollicking, EC Comics-style horrorfest of the most gratuitous kind."

In the film, five teenagers on their way to a concert take a shortcut, only to end up lost and menaced by cannibalistic zombies and a family of serial killers. Abandoning the traditional song and dance numbers featured in almost all "Lollywood" films, Khan and Nawab Saghar, a veteran makeup specialist with more than a hundred movies to his credit, focused instead on "severed heads, eyes being gouged out, impalings, transvestites, drugs, rock 'n' roll, Islamic zombies, cannibalism, nubile young women and gushing blood."

The shift to producing a contemporary cult film like *Zibahkhana* may represent a new direction for Mondo Macabro, but it's a direction that label co-founder Pete Tombs has been planning for a long while.

"We started as a production outfit in the 1990s doing TV shows in the UK, and it had always been our intention to go into features in some way or another," explains Tombs, who also served as the producer and co-writer of *Zibahkhana*. "DVD started as our sideline, but then it became the main show."

Khan, who also writes film criticism and runs The Hot Spot, a Pakistan-based chain of ice cream cafes plastered with horror posters, appeared in one of Mondo Macabro's TV documentaries on South Asian movies. The meeting gave birth to the collaboration.

"We discovered that we shared a passion for horror and cult cinema from around the world. That led to us working together on the DVD restoration of 1967's *Zinda Laash* (*The Living Corpse*)," says Khan, who then came up with a proposal for a new Pakistani feature.

"We started off with some outrageously over-the-top plans and gradually whittled them down to something much more manageable," Tombs notes. "Omar had most of the ideas, what he needed was a bit of production and, more importantly, post-production assistance."

Zibahkhana was shot in July and August of 2006, in the punishing heat of Pakistan's monsoon season.

"Things were about as uncomfortable as they could have possibly been," recalls Khan. "We had to shoot in the jungle where we were surrounded by a zillion bugs, motherfucking cobras and giant monitor lizards. I would often have cockroaches strolling in and out of my clothes. Then, just a day after we ended our shoot, our location was used to dump a couple of freshly murdered corpses – they were discovered in a hut that we built for one of our characters!"



Lollywood of the Dead: *Zombies rule the land in* ***Zibahkhana.***

Even though he is doubtful that Pakistani censors will allow him to screen the film in his own country, Khan still hopes that the extreme nature of *Zibahkhana* will shake up the country's floundering genre industry.

"It's time to encourage Pakistani filmmakers to realize that commercial cinema can exist without six songs, wiggling bums, two rape scenes and a chase," he says. "We are stuck on formula here in Pakistan, and I hope *Zibahkhana* will encourage some aspiring filmmakers to dare to be different."

Zibahkhana made its world premiere at Denmark's Natfilm Festival in March and will make its North American debut at the Philadelphia Film Festival this month. News on future theatrical screenings can be found at the film's official site, zibahkhana.com.

Paul Corupe



Original Stuart Gordon storyboards up for auction

Dreadlines

Stuart Gordon is having a virtual garage sale and we're all invited to check it out. The celebrated writer/director of films like *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond* is cleaning out his files and offering up storyboards that be created for many of his best-known films.

"My wife used to joke about the amount of stuff I've accumulated over the years," laughs Gordon, whose early training as a graphic artist was put to good use in these pre-production mementoes, "but I always told her, 'Hey, you never know, this stuff may be valuable in the future.'"

Gordon is putting that theory to the test, teaming up with LA horror store Dark Delicacies (*RM#54*) to auction off storyboards from films including *Re-Animator*, *From Beyond*, *Dolls* and *King of the Ants*, plus his two *Masters of Horror* episodes, *H.P. Lovecraft's Dreams in the Witch-House* and *The Black Cat*.

"It was totally Stuart's idea," says Dark Delicacies co-owner Del Howison. "He called us and asked if this might be something we would be interested in. Of course we jumped at the idea; being a horror fan doesn't mean you're stupid!"

"It made sense," Gordon says. "It seemed like they had the appropriate clientele, and it's actually just down the street from our office, which makes it very convenient."

While the filmmaker – currently in post-production on his next feature, *Stuck* (*RM#64*) – admits to slight regret at parting with fragments from his past, he feels that at least they'll be going to good homes.

"I assume [buyers will] take care of them, and I'd rather that they be on display than stuck in a manila envelope at the back of a filing cabinet."

Dark Delicacies will display Stuart's storyboards on its website, darkdel.com, as well as in store. (Interested parties can make their bids via email, phone or in person.) Every month, Dark Delicacies will mount a new group of ten pieces to be bid on over a thirteen-day period, the most coveted being a tryptic of storyboards from *Re-Animator*.

"Stuart is setting the starting bid price, and he is trying to scatter it about so there are lower-end prices along with pricey pieces – something for every collector," notes Howison.

And what exactly will Gordon be doing with the potential big bucks rolling his way in the next few months?

"You know, to be honest I hadn't really thought about that – mostly I'm just curious to see how they do." He pauses. "I dunno – maybe I'll buy a boat?"

Tom Murray



Storyboards for Gordon's ***Masters of Horror*** *episodes* ***Dreams in the Witch-House*** *and* ***The Black Cat***



Dreadlines

ROADKILL

FROM THE INFO HIGHWAY

brickfish.com/ruemorgue
If you've ever wanted to design a *Rue Morgue* cover, here's your chance. Beginning April 1, visit this site and submit your creations. The grand prize winner will receive a complimentary one-year subscription to *RM*, T-shirt, hat and poster. Second and third place finishers get a six-month subscription.

itsmyremote.com/kk.html
Conor Timmis wants to generate interest in his Boris Karloff biopic and to do so, he's recreated, along with director Vatche Arabian, several scenes from the actor's filmography, and made them available for download online. Watch, enjoy, then spread the wicked word.

webcomicsnation.com/splitlip
Writer (and sometimes *RM* contributor) Sam Costello teams up with a variety of comic book artists for this ongoing series of online comics. Primarily illustrated using a variety of black and white techniques, these psychological horror stories are guaranteed to marinate your mind.

finalgirl.blogspot.com
Meet Stacie Ponder, comic book inker, artist and prolific blogger. *Final Girl* is Ponder's frequently updated, occasionally themed, horror movie blog, in which she discusses and critiques primarily slasher flicks of the '70s and '80s. Candid, sarcastic, snarky and fun.

crazymonkeygames.com/fullscreen.php?game=Boxhead-More-Rooms
Use a pistol, an uzi, a double-barrelled shotgun and more, to blast your way through the zombie hordes in this Flash shooting game. Beware of the devious red devils, though, as they don't drop dead so easy. Happy hunting!



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Compiled by Monica S. Kuebler
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Zombies invade new interactive gaming technology

If the works of George Romero have taught us anything, it's that it's only a matter of time until the zombie hordes rise up and slowly shamble their way to world domination. If we're going to survive this day of reckoning, we've got to be quick on our feet. Thankfully, the perfect training tool is already among us in *MobZombies*, a hand-held game that gives new meaning to the word "mobile."

The brainchild of Los Angeles-based programmers Aaron Meyers and William Carter and artist William Biedbeck, *MobZombies* combines motion-sensing technology with classic eight-bit arcade style to create an interactive game in which your actions control the movements of your character. Armed with a hand-held device and a motion-detecting sensor rig, players enter a virtual world swarming with pixel-art zombies. The goal is simply to stay alive by either running away or planting bombs to take out the pursuing hordes.

"We wanted to take the idea of mobile games a bit farther by actually making them mobile in the physical sense – something you could pick up anywhere and feel a sense of physical connection to both the virtual world of the game and the physical world surrounding you," Carter says.

MobZombies isn't just some toy you can idly click away at on the bus: the upshot is that the player's physical position in the real world controls the avatar's position on the hand-held game screen, forcing the player to move around in their environment in order to stay alive. According to Carter, *MobZombies* was born out of a desire to prove that mobile games didn't just have to be the "bad or dinky" games you'd find on your cellphone.

"The main thing I love about this project is the interplay between the game world, which is really simple – just the zombies and your character – and the real world, which is so diverse and unpredictable."

To make the concept work, Carter and Meyers devised a relative positioning system using a Bluetooth accelerometer worn at the hip that beams information about the player's speed to a hand-held device (in this case a Sony Vaio UX) combined with a digital compass in the device that tracks the direction the player is moving. Unlike satellite-based technology such as GPS, which can be inaccurate and slow to refresh, Carter explains, this rig allows for a fluid feeling of control over one's zombie-beleaguered avatar.



Photo by Julian Bleecker

*The **MobZombies** game interface.*

Though *MobZombies* is still in development, Carter and Meyers demonstrated the game at *Wired* magazine's NextFest in New York last fall to much acclaim, and hope to soon roll out a completely wireless, cell phone-friendly version in conjunction with *Make* magazine – to be provided as open-source software so people can play the game or make their own.

"The reaction has definitely been positive," says Carter. "It's been a lot of fun for us to see people playing it, because they really start acting funny – walking carefully with sudden short movements, navigating through crowds and around chairs. Because in the real world, you may have a straight shot from Point A to Point B, but in the game world, there might be a bunch of brain-thirsty zombies occupying that route. You just have to find a way that works in both worlds, and that's the fun of it."

For more information or to check out photos and video clips of the game, go to mobzombies.com.

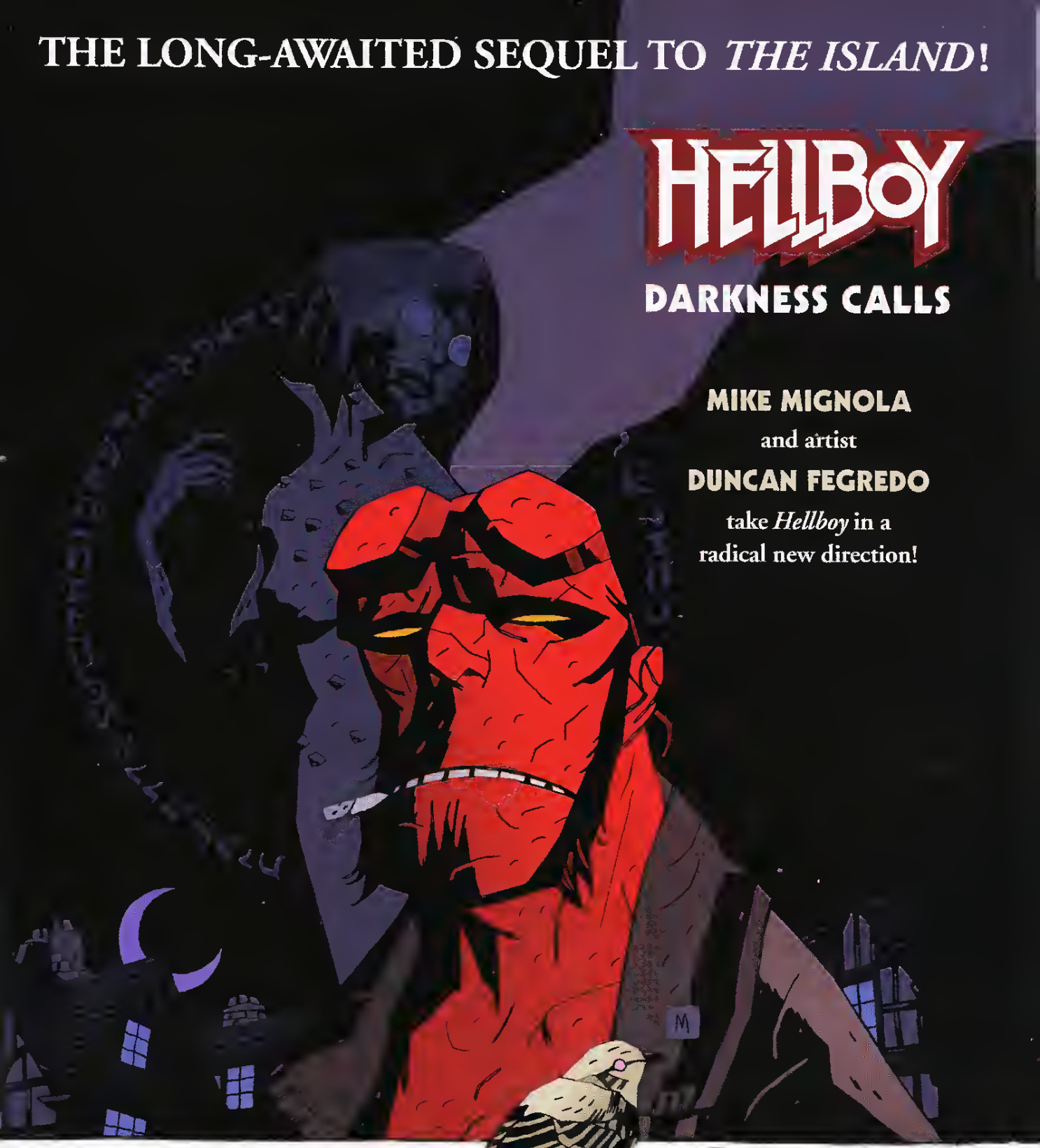
Chris Boutet



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THE CORONER'S REPORT 13

Weird Stats
Morbid Facts

+ Vlad the Impaler is rumoured to not only have eaten the flesh of some of his enemies, but to have spread their blood on his bread like butter.

+ Stanley Kubrick chose to adapt Stephen King's *The Shining* because, out of all the horror fiction he'd read at the time, it was the first story that held his attention.

+ The word "tintinnabulation," meaning the ringing of bells, was invented by Edgar Allan Poe in his 1849 poem "The Bells."

+ Ninety percent of Bela Lugosi's fan mail came from women.

+ The Egyptian queen Cleopatra allegedly took her own life by hiding two asps in a basket of fruit that she was eating from, knowing that sooner or later one would strike her dead.

+ To play Leatherface, Gunnar Hansen had to wear three-inch heels, which caused him to continually hit his head on doorways.

+ Over 20,000 spectators showed up for one of America's last public executions, which took place in Kansas in August of 1936.

+ The first theatrical performance of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* took place just one year after the Robert Louis Stevenson's tale was first published.

+ On February 8, 2007, a truck carrying 40 tons of cow intestines tipped over on a Wisconsin interstate spilling its gruesome cargo all over the highway.

+ Despite his extensive horror filmography, actor Donald Pleasence claimed he did not enjoy watching genre films.

+ In the 1800s, when lead coffins were being constructed, it was important that they were equipped with proper ventilation. If not, they would often explode once decomposition of their human contents began.

+ In order to see double bills of Hammer films in his youth, an underage Peter Jackson would – in his own words – "try to get in by looking as much like sixteen as I could."

+ In 789, French king Charlemagne made the practice of cremation illegal (it was considered un-Christian) and punishable by death.

Compiled by **Monica S. Kuebler**
Got a weird stat or morbid fact?
Send it through to info@rue-morgue.com

The Rue Morgue SICK TOP SIX

Instances of ANGRY APPENDAGES



1. *Evil Dead II*
Ash's homicidal hand

2. *Phantasm*
The Tall Man's ferocious finger fly

3. *Beyond Re-Animator*
Dismembered member rat rumble

4. *Return of the Living Dead*
"It's not weasels in the bags..."

5. *The Hand (1981)*
Michael Caine's murderous mitt

6. *Body Parts (1991)*
Lethal limb transplant



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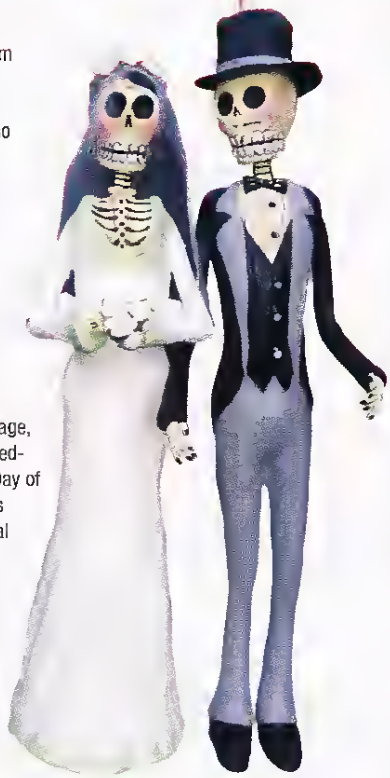


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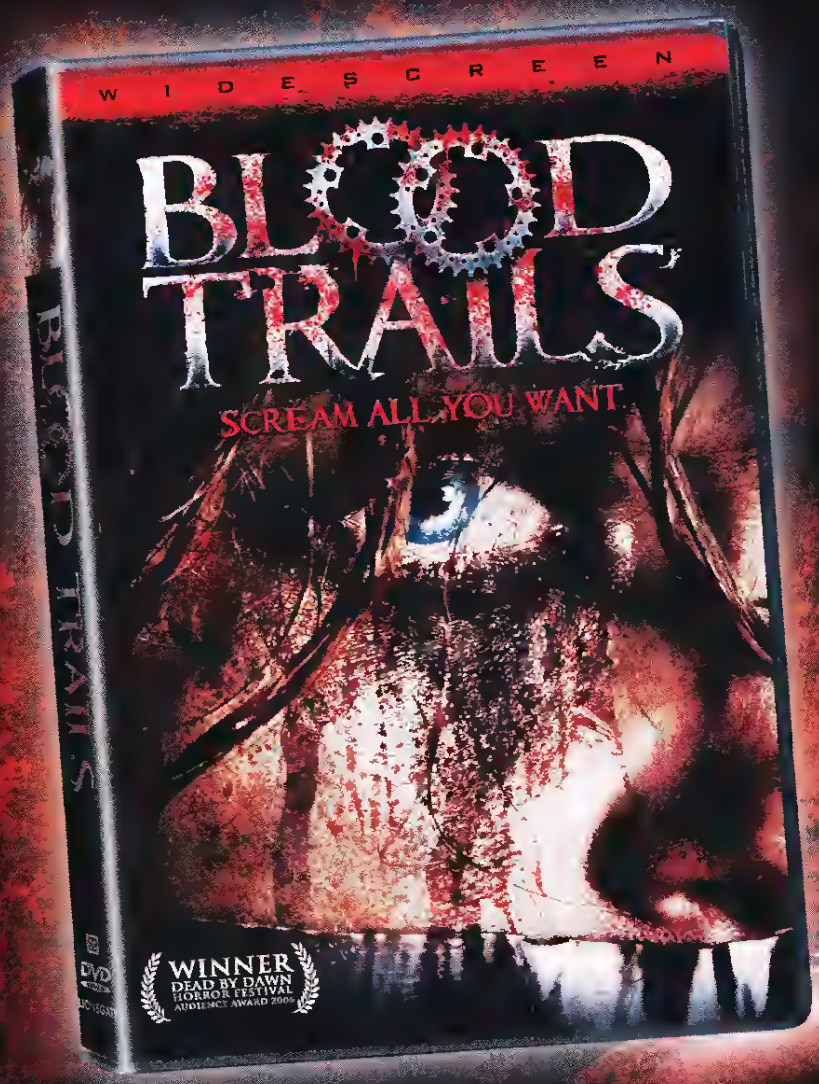
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SHOCKING! DERANGED! SINFUL!

In the history of American cinema, there's never been anything quite like the grindhouse circuit: trash-strewn theatres with even trashier movies that pulled no punches when it came to blood and boobs. This issue, *Rue Morgue* examines the seedy, sensational movement, as well as the Quentin Tarantino/Robert Rodriguez double bill that pays homage to it.



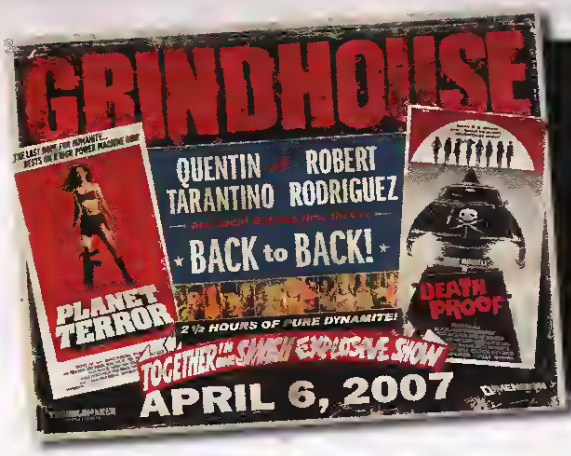
SEX VIOLENCE AND 42ND ST

BY STEPHEN THROWER INTERVIEW BY JOVANKA VUCKOVIC

For over 50 years, from the 1930s to the 1980s, America boasted a second film industry, the exploitation arena, where some of the wildest, most outrageous films imaginable proliferated. During its decadent peak in the 1970s, exploitation was a kick in the teeth of "good taste" – thrills and spills and artenal sprays were plentiful, T&A was lewd, crude and wanton. The advertising ballyhoo was a sensationalist art in itself, which often outdid the actual movies. Cinemas dealing exclusively with this parallel industry were known as "grindhouses," an allusion to the burlesque "bump-and-grind" entertainment for which many of them were previously known. The term also brings to mind meat-grinding: highly appropriate considering the violence so frequently purveyed onscreen. "Grindhouse" is one of those labels that was probably pejorative to begin with, but for exploitation fans, it's the perfect evocation. It has a pungency, reeking of flesh, spunk, gore and pussy – which is pretty much what you got when the films were firing on all cylinders.

The grindhouse phenomenon's Mecca, its El Dorado if you will, was located in Manhattan, on 42nd Street, running through the notorious red-light district Times Square. With the Square since cleaned up for tourists, the strip is long gone, but for exploitation movie fans born too late to visit, the image of 42nd Street as a Dantean Circle (and Stalls of Hell) is incredibly seductive. Other cities, LA for instance, could boast their share of sleazy cinemas, but the cluster of New York movie houses colloquially known as "The Deuce" possessed a diabolical glamour, something that still excites the imagination today.

Photos courtesy of Dimension Films. Photographer: Rico Torres



"WE TOOK INSPIRATION FROM [GRINDHOUSE] MOVIES BUT THEY NEVER REALLY HAD THE TIME OR THE BUDGET TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER ON THEIR POSTERS... OURS ARE GOING TO DO THAT." ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

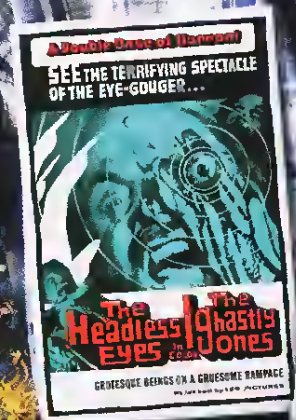
Watching extreme movies at home on DVD is a safe, private, personal affair utterly unlike the grindhouse experience. To go to a theatre on the Deuce to see Dyanne Thorne slicing off a soldier's testicles in *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS* (1975) or William Sanderson unleashing a torrent of race-hate expletives in the revenge shocker *Fight For Your Life* (1977), you needed either nerves of steel or a bit of the psycho in your own makeup. Ushers admitted anyone who could afford the ticket, so an assortment of winos, weirdos and jerk-offs would settle in for the day, nursing their personal hells and nirvanas. Drugs were bought and consumed, sex indulged in the bathrooms or tenebrous balcony seats, and arguments you wouldn't want to get involved in played out in row after sticky-floored row of crud-flecked seating. But if you were cool with all that, grindhouses were a paradise for the exploitation addict. Unlike these parsimonious days, lurid wonders such as *The Headless Eyes* (1971), *I Drink Your Blood* (1971) and *Hitch Hike To Hell* (1977) were offered to audiences in double or even triple bills. Three sick-fuck films on one ticket... Heaven!

Exploitation went crazy in the '70s. Censorship was relaxed and the gate to excess thrown wide open. As hungry distributors strove to maintain their edge against television and the major studios, the race was on to be more extreme, more shocking, more deranged. Sex and violence are the Alpha and Omega of exploitation, and grindhouses really ran through the alphabet: action (*Devil's Express*, 1976), bloodshed (*Scream Bloody Murder*, 1972), cannibals (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 1974), devil worship (*Satan's Cheerleaders*, 1977), all the way through to zombies (*Bloodeaters*, 1979) and back.

Sexploitation films too rose to another level. Softcore went hardcore, kinkiness and bizarre fantasy blossomed: the levee was breaking and all manner of exotic flora and fauna were being carried down the Deuce on the currents of exploitation. Movies like *Forced Entry* (1972) and *The Defiance of Good* (1975) provided intense confrontations with rape and sexual degradation; and the grindhouses showing them became throbbing nerve centres of illicit stimulation.

An alternative history of American cinema can be mapped through these movies, and the grindhouse exhibition circuit that sustained them. Before we get carried away, though, it's worth admitting that the industry also produced some of the most hopeless celluloid swarf ever to run through a projector. "Grindhouse movies" are sometimes simply a grind to watch. Never mind, what matters is that taken together, both good and bad constituted a







KNB FX topper Greg Nicotero makes a cameo as a "sicko" in Robert Rodriguez's ***Planet Terror****, a paean to classic grindhouse double bills.*



Robert Rodriguez's zombie bloodbath.

parallel film culture. Not in the mood for *Breakfast at Tiffany's*? Well, why not let Andy Milligan serve you a breast in a meat pie in *Bloodthirsty Butchers* (1970) instead? Having such fine alternatives to mainstream Hollywood was a blessing for fans, and it also fed into the wider film culture. Watching *Taxi Driver*, for instance, you can tell that both Scorsese and Schrader were intimately acquainted with the Deuce's programming.

The relationship between the majors and the independents changed forever with the advent of *Jaws* (1975) and the runaway success of *Star Wars* (1977). Grisly shocks and fairground thrills were no longer the sole province of the grindhouses. Thirty years after exploitation legend Herschell Gordon Lewis (who contributes an exclusive article on p.27) assaulted audiences with the image of a woman's tongue yanked out of her gullet in *Blood Feast* (see Classic Cut, p. 82), Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) featured a scene in which a villain pulls a steaming human heart from a victim's chest – in a PG film, no less.

In the '80s, video stuck a knife into the guts of the grindhouse scene, robbing it of its most dedicated denizens, the porno addicts. By the late '90s, the grindhouse theatres were gone, victims of clean-up campaigns and urban homogenization. However, a new generation of filmmakers have since realized that when horror went mainstream in the mid '80s; something raw and vital was lost – and they want it back. Remakes of grindhouse classics are being commissioned left, right and centre (including *The Crazies*, *The Wizard of Gore* and even *The Last House on the Left*), and now the King of Cool Cinema, Quentin Tarantino, has put together a dream-ticket journey to the glory days.

His film is simply called *Grindhouse* and it's both an homage to the low-budget horror films of the '70s and a retooling of the whole exploitation double-bill experience in essence offering two movies for the price of one, with Quentin Tarantino splitting the running-time with the director of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, Robert Rodriguez. To further capture the grindhouse aesthetic, the films were deliberately degraded, cartoon advertisements were cut in, and even bogus trailers for "coming attractions" – including ones by Rob Zombie (*The Devil's Rejects*), Eli Roth (*Hostel*) and Edgar Wright (*Shaun of the Dead*) – have been sandwiched between each 75-minute feature (see p.20 for an interview with the trailer directors).

Tarantino contributes the action thriller *Death Proof*, starring Kurt Russell (p.19) as a muscle car killer who seeks out women to murder in outrageous vehicular accidents, while Rodriguez goes full-on horror with *Planet Terror*, a zombie bloodbath starring Rose McGowan (who also has a role in *Death Proof*), *Six Feet Under*'s Freddy Rodriguez, genre veteran Tom Savini (p.23), cameos from KNB FX topper Greg Nicotero, Tarantino himself (as a character called The Rapist) and more. Sure to be the genre film of the year, *Grindhouse* has everyone's attention, including the mainstream press, a strange irony given the spirit of the picture.

Rue Morgue speaks to Rodriguez about collaborating with Tarantino to make their ultra-violent love letter to the grindhouse circuit.

Continued on page 22...



Photos courtesy of Dimension Films. Photographer: Rico Torres

KURT RUSSELL TAKES US INSIDE THE HOMICIDAL MIND OF HIS LATEST BADASS CHARACTER, *DEATH PROOF*'S STUNTMAN MIKE.

INTERVIEW WITH A MUSCLE CAR KILLER



BY TOM MURRAY

When a homicidal ex-stuntman is riding you down late at night in his car you might just want to remember what ol' Jack Burton has to say. Or, better yet, interview ol' Jack Burton himself about his thoughts on the matter.

"Well, I just call 'em car chase films, because they're all about the American vehicle," begins Kurt Russell, a.k.a. Jack Burton (*Big Trouble in Little China*), a.k.a. Snake Plissken (*Escape from New York*), a.k.a. R.J. MacReady (*The Thing*) and now the bloodthirsty Stuntman Mike in Quentin Tarantino's *Death Proof*.

"I think this movie has something to say about American men, who are kind of wandering at the moment, and young American women who are waiting for a void to be filled and are trying to fill it themselves, and in this genre they pay for that," he explains. "Along comes this dinosaur, Stuntman Mike, who belongs to another era."

Sounds like 1971's *Two-Lane Blacktop* with a body count, but Russell – who replaced Mickey Rourke at the beginning of the shoot – is guessing just as much as he's relating facts about the upcoming feature, which will be paired with Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* as part of the double bill that is *Grindhouse*.

"I'm as much in the dark as anyone else," he admits. "I can't wait to see the finished product. Quentin shoots a lot, so I'm not sure what's in there and what's not in it. I can say that it's a very modern-day version of films like *Vanishing Point*, *Gone in 60 Seconds* [and] *Dirty Mary Crazy Larry*."

It's no surprise that a postmodern genre junkie such as Tarantino – a filmmaker known for reviving and mixing subgenres – would take the retro cult car-fetish movie and add a murderous psychopath. Given the director's record for hiring his favourite leading men and character actors of decades past – John Travolta, David Carradine or Harvey Keitel – the 56-year-old Russell is a likely point man for Tarantino this time out.

"I think that in his mind, he's hired Snake Plissken," Russell laughs. "He's hired Rudy Russo [*Used Cars*], he's hired Jack Burton. .. Y'know, *The Thing* is a great horror movie – great story, so much about paranoia, and with a great monster. There's also a great set-up. There's a monster in this one as well, if you will – he's human, and somebody you could run into in an elevator and just not know he's a monster. I think it's the conversation on the elevator that Quentin likes to focus on. That way it gives you a much greater impact when the monster performs, that's what I like about it."

It's that certain kind of monster that will put Russell back on the genre map after a decade in lighter mainstream fare (his last real genre role was when he reprised Plissken for *Escape from L.A.* in 1996). Stuntman Mike may be his ultimate badass character, as the facially scarred villain who kills with a skull-and-crossbones-adorned muscle car. Auto wrecks, explosions and death are definitely on the menu in *Death Proof*, but is it a bloodbath comparable to the zombie grue in *Planet Terror*?

"There are climactic moments of extreme, uh – gory isn't the right word, though it definitely is gory – *extreme human decapitation*," teases Russell. "Quentin's version is a lot more like what the genre contained in the '70s and '60s."

Russell also points out that if it weren't for his aforementioned genre roles in John Carpenter films, playing intense action-horror heroes Plissken, MacReady and Burton, it's unlikely he'd be starring in one of the most anticipated movies of the year. Tarantino went as far as to play DVD clips and movie soundtracks from a bunch of the Carpenter/Russell classics on set for the benefit of cast and crew to get into the "circus" atmosphere of the whole thing. Although Russell admits he found it slightly disconcerting at times, he was also more than pleased overall.

"They got what John [Carpenter] and I did all those years ago, and you can't help but like them as people because of it," he says. "I love that 25 years later *you* are fully enjoying those films."



Rose McGowan and Kurt Russell in **Death Proof.**

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A TRIPLE BILL OF THE FILMMAKERS BEHIND THE SINSATIONAL TRAILERS IN GRINDHOUSE.

TRAILER TRASH

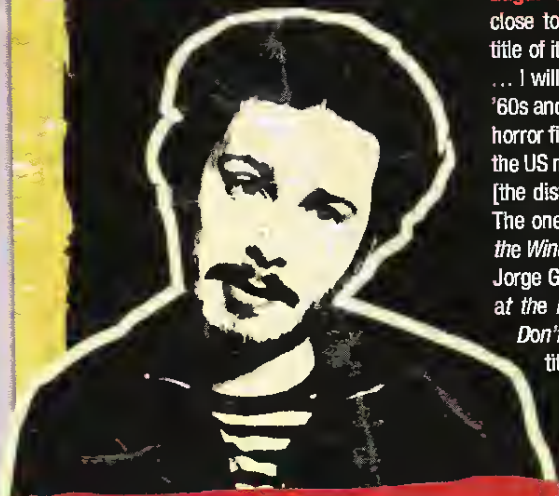


ELI ROTH!

Welcome to a bold new experiment in motion picture making. To properly retrofit *Grindhouse*, Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez rounded out their double feature with not only artificial print damage and vintage-style concession ads, but also added trailers for several exploitation movies... that don't actually exist. To help, they enlisted three directors with a twisted track record of genre insanity. Eli Roth (*Cabin Fever*, *Hostel*), Edgar Wright (*Shaun of the Dead*, *Hot Fuzz*) and Rob Zombie (*House of 1000 Corpses*, *The Devil's Rejects*) discuss their salacious mini-movies and mad love of grindhouse cinema. Brace yourself for the shocking truth!

Describe your trailer.

Eli Roth: It's an early '80s holiday slasher film called *Thanksgiving*. I grew up in Massachusetts, where Thanksgiving is a pretty big deal, as you may imagine. Every November my friend Jeff Rendell and I were expecting [a Thanksgiving-themed film] to come out, but no one ever made it. It seemed like they'd run out of holiday slasher films with *My Bloody Valentine*, *Mother's Day*, *April Fool's Day* – it was so obvious to us. It was our dream to make this film, and the trailer gave us the opportunity to just shoof the greatest kills.



EDGAR WRIGHT!

Edgar Wright: I'm keeping my cards slightly close to my chest. I haven't even revealed the title of it because it's the punchline to the trailer. … I will say that my inspiration was [that] in the '60s and '70s you would get trailers for European horror films, and they had their titles changed for the US market to some kind of "cool," insane title [the distributors] had come up with for the US. The one that really inspired me was *Don't Open the Window* [a.k.a. *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*], the Jorge Grau film. In the UK it's called *Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue*, in Spain it's called *Don't Speak Ill of the Dead*; it's got a different title in every single territory. Whenever I saw the trailer for the American one – "OON'T OPEN THE WINOOW!" – I was thinking, "There's no window sequence in the film." They just kind of slammed it on and there's no sequence in the trailer that refers to the title at all. So that's sort of the premise of mine: a British/Euro horror film that in no point during the trailer do they let on that it is a British or Euro horror film.

Rob Zombie: Well, [*Werewolf Women of the S.S.* is] not fictional actually, it's based on actual documents uncovered in Hitler's bunker, so that's one thing everyone needs to know. Towards the end of World War II, in 1945, [during] Hitler's final attempt to win the war, he created a race of super werewolf women to unleash on the Allied forces.

Why did you choose this particular style of grindhouse flick?

ER: Trailers are great – it's all money shots. Every shot has either blood, nudity, or both! I love early '80s holiday slasher films, this was a great excuse to shoot one.

EW: I'm a big fan of the art of trailer making. What we're doing with these trailers is celebrating a different part of the form. … It has become a bit of a lost art – the tease. It's worth making really violent films so that the trailers can't spoil them. What was a film that you've seen in the last ten years that hasn't been spoiled by the trailer? I think *Kill Bill Volume 1* is one of them because you just can't show all the great stuff in the trailer.

RZ: There are certain types of movies, "grindhouse movies" that could still be made today, I think, but that sort of subgenre of the sexy Nazi movie – like *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS*, or *Fräulein Devil* or those sorts of movies – I just don't see those being made any more. I find it amazing

WARNING! Persons Under 18 Will Positively Will Not Be Admitted! R

MADMEN

BY DAVE ALEXANDER

they were made in the first place. So that's why I gravitate towards things like that; I thought I would go for the most extreme thing I could think of.

What does the term "grindhouse" represent to you?

ER: Well, there's really one definition of "grindhouse" and that's the grindhouse cinemas of the '70s. To me, it reminds me of the late '70s – stale popcorn and candy stuck to my shoelaces.

EW: Not having grown up in the States and not having the privilege of going to [a grindhouse], it's more that what is so great about [*Grindhouse*] is that there's an entire generation that has never seen double bills. I think this film couldn't come at a better time, even though it hearkens back to something from the '70s. Exhibition now at the cinema has become a bit bland; there's no kind of sense of showmanship. You go to the multiplex, you go up the escalator, you buy your popcorn, you watch your film and you don't stay in the place a single second [afterwards]. The cinema should be about something more, it should be a whole evening's worth of fun.

RZ: "Grindhouse" to me was pretty much all the movies that used to be on 42nd street when I lived in New York, that used to play at the drive-in theatres, so anything outside mainstream cinema, in a way, would always look to me like a grindhouse movie. I never really used that term, I would think of them more as drive-in movies because where I grew up as a kid there was a drive-in, and that's where we used to go see triple features – these types of movies, basically.

What was the first grindhouse film to seriously damage your innocence?

ER: Man, there are so many. I remember seeing a double bill of *Pieces* and *Basket Case* when I was a kid. Those were huge influences on me.

EW: I was in art college and we had the big "video nasty" scandal in the early '80s where loads of films got banned. When I was about seventeen, eighteen, a lof of films were banned on VHS – *The Evil Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Exorcist* – that you couldn't get hold of, and when I was working in the [college film] archives, there was guy there that had all of them on cassette. I remember spending a two-week period watching *Nightmare in a Damaged Brain* [a.k.a. *Nightmare*] and *New York Ripper*. … A double bill of *Nightmare in a Damaged Brain* and *New York Ripper* can be quite damaging for an eighteen-year-old boy.

RZ: The first one where my jaw dropped to the floor was either *Cannibal Holocaust* or *Make Them Die Slowly*. I've seen all the classic stuff that we've talked about, but something like those ones, where you didn't even know that a movie could go to the limits that *Cannibal Holocaust* could go to. It was the early '80s, I was living in New York and it was playing on a double feature on 42nd street with another movie called *Savage Man... Savage Beast*, which was basically just film footage of actual animals being killed, hunters killing elephants and stuff – a "wonderful" double bill. It was late at night and 42nd street in the '80s was nothing but homeless people and prostitutes, basically, in the theatres. It was disgusting, it was the perfect setting.

Who are your grindhouse heroes?

ER: Ruggero Deodato. Sergio Martino. Fernando Di Leo. These guys made movies with budgetary limits but with no limits on creativity or gore. I love *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Torso* and *To Be Twenty*.

EW: I'm a big fan of Mario Bava – any of the trippier [films] like *Twitch of the Death Nerve* [a.k.a. *A Bay of Blood*] – an arty slasher film.

RZ: I would consider Russ Meyer movies grindhouse movies because they're set in that world, and of everyone making movies in that world, he was the most talented. I love the guy because he was like a one-man show; he was editing, directing and usually his girlfriend at the time was the star.

Realistically, what are the chances of your trailer becoming a full-blown feature?

ER: One hundred percent if I decide to. There are a lot of options in front of me right now, and I just have to go with whatever feels right. If I wanted to do that as my next feature, I could start production today. I just don't know if the feature would ever live up to the trailer! But isn't that always the case?

EW: I don't know, I haven't even shot it yet! [*Note: Wright was shooting his trailer two days after the interview*] My trailer will be reasonably nonsensical: you watch the trailer for *Inferno* or *Suspiria*, you wouldn't actually be able to pinpoint just what the hell is going on.

RZ: [Sarcastically] I would say 100 percent. That's what I'm guessing right about now. It must be gold.



ROB ZOMBIE!

NOUVEAU NUDIE CUTIE

PERVERT!

Starring Mary Carey, Sean Andrews and Darrell Sandeen
Directed by Jonathan Yudis
Written by Mike Davis
TLA

A smirking love letter to grindhouse auteurs Russ Meyer and H.G. Lewis, Jonathan Yudis' debut feature *Pervert!* is a fun, if flawed, romp of cartoonish sex, murder and those holy beacons of exploitation cinema: gargantuan breasts.

Overflowing with bared flesh and lowbrow humour, the film's throwaway plot has college student James (Sean Andrews) arriving at his father Hezekiah's (Darrell Sandeen) desert farm for summer vacation, only to find the dirty old man shacked up with curvaceous teaser Cheryl (former porn star Mary Carey) and constructing statuettes of buxom babes out of butcher's meat. After Hezekiah discovers Cheryl dallying with his son, however, she suddenly goes missing. James suspects his deranged dad may have murdered the girl in a jealous rage – unless, of course, it was his own penis, turned into a free-roaming, killer appendage by a voodoo curse.



As with most modern genre spoofs, *Pervert!* is too self-aware to fully capture the spirit of earlier exploitation classics, but the first half of the slickly directed film is surprisingly faithful to Meyer's notoriously whacked-out sex comedies, as big, bouncing Amazonian women tangle with deranged geezers – all shot in an authentically larger-than-life style.

When the story takes a sharp left turn into slapstick genital horror, however, this breezy approach noticeably deflates. There are some old-school arterial sprays and gaping chest wound effects, but the idea of a stop-motion bloodthirsty penis isn't as funny as Yudis thinks it is (*Beyond Re-Animator* did it better with its memorable rat vs. cock fight), and the disjointed conclusion comes off more like a typical Troma affair than a slice of classic grindhouse cinema.

But occasional missteps aside – including Carey's abysmal acting performance – it's hard to dislike a film this gloriously goofy, especially when it brilliantly taps into the most outrageous motifs of exploitation cinema. No one can ever replace Russ Meyer, but outside of the real thing, *Pervert!* jiggles and bounces with the best of them.

Paul Corupe



PLANET TERROR

Cherry (Rose McGowan) and Dr. Dakota Block (Marley Shelton) face a zombie horde.

How did you get exposed to the American exploitation films of grindhouse's heyday?

Through Quentin basically [laughs]. He was the one who was more versed in it than I was. He would show them at his film festivals and at his house, and I just thought, "We gotta recreate this experience for people, so let's do a double feature."

Got any favourites? If you could pick three essential viewings, what would they be?

Probably the ones that inspired me to make this movie were Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* – *Rolling Thunder*, is definitely another one; it was shot in San Antonio, so I knew about that one growing up. This guy gets his hand chopped off in a disposal and he has a hook for a hand for the rest of the film. That's a really great movie with William Devane and Tommy Lee Jones. And the third.... ahhh.. I'll think about that

Of all the grindhouse topics, why zombies?

I had been writing [a zombie script] about ten years ago and I remember when I was shooting *The Faculty* I told the cast, "Hey we gotta make a zombie movie, I've written 30 pages. Zombie movies have been dead for a while but I know they're gonna come back strong, we gotta be first!' [Laughs] And they were all excited about it but then I never knew where to go with the rest of the script, so the zombie wave came and went and I thought, "Gosh, no one really did it the way I was gonna do it." So I think now's a good time to do the zombie movie I've always wanted to do.

What do you hope to inject into the well-tread zombie subgenre with Planet Terror?

Oh... you'll see! There's lotsa new themes in there.

You've talked about going over to Quentin's house to watch films; did he prescribe certain grindhouse movies to you after you guys hatched this idea?

We watched different things that he liked, but we knew we wanted to do it in the horror genre first because there are so many different double features you could do. We thought we should do the first one as a horror film because that's just the most popular genre.

This is the third time you've worked with Quentin Tarantino. How much did Quentin figure into your direction and you into his?

He was on mine for a little while, operating second camera actually, getting ramped up to be able to DP his own movie. I didn't actually shoot his movie, so I didn't visit his set hardly at all. After a while it was more about us surprising each other with our movies rather than really working on them together. More in pre-production we worked on them together.

I thought you were supposed to DP his movie?

I was going to but then I was going to be busy editing mine, so I thought it was time for him to shoot his own movie and he was ready to do so.

What keeps you two collaborating?

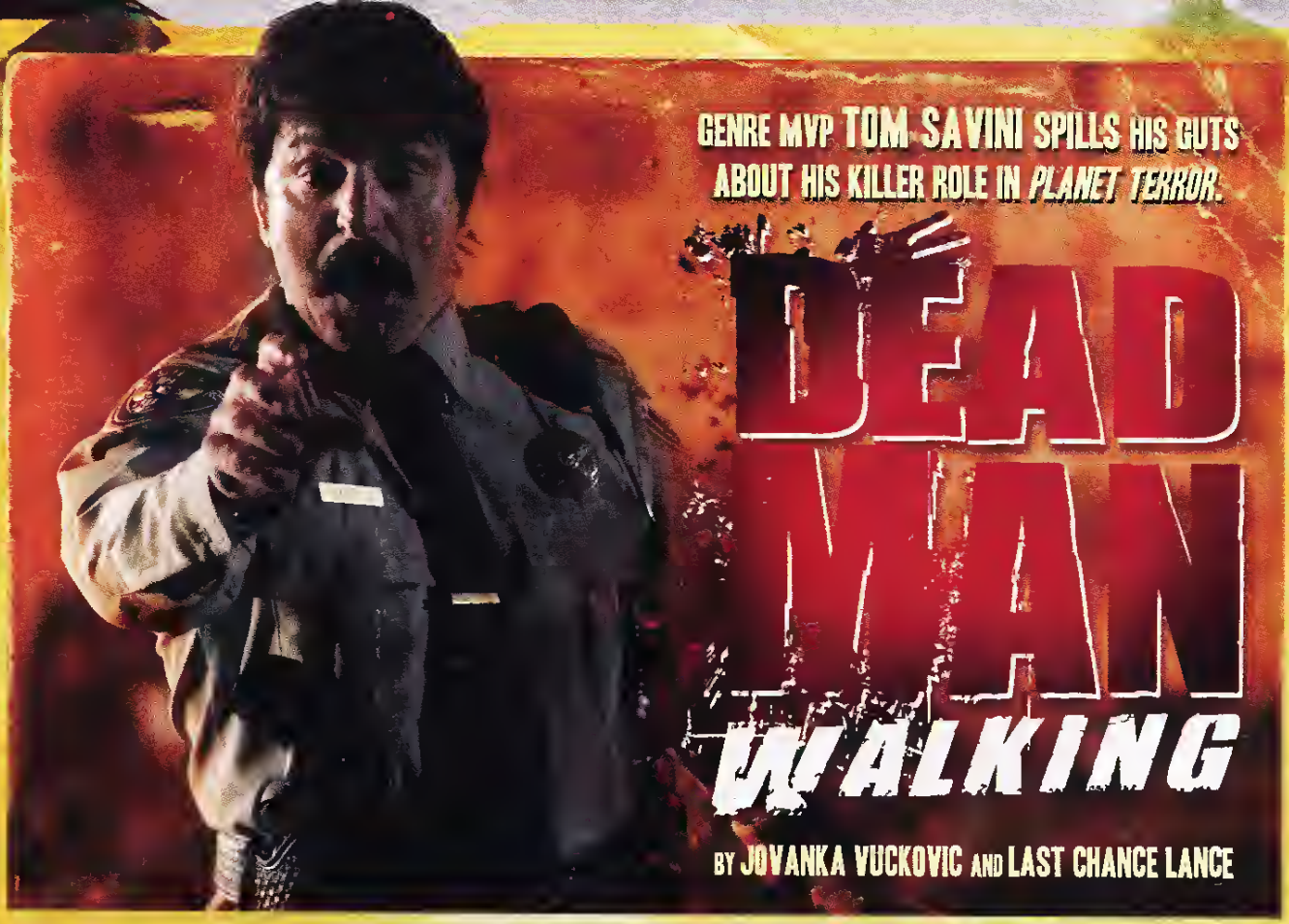
When we did *Sin City*, he said, "That was so much fun, I don't wanna stop working together. We should do something again." I said, "Well, we could do something for our ten-year anniversary of *From Dusk Till Dawn*." [Laughs] And that was where *Grindhouse* came in.

There can't help but be some healthy competition between you two.

No, not really, we're making two completely different movies. Mine's a zombie movie – mine's

Continued on page 26...

Photos courtesy of Dimension Films. Photographer Ruco Torres



GENRE MVP TOM SAVINI SPILLS HIS GUTS ABOUT HIS KILLER ROLE IN *PLANET TERROR*.

DEAD MAN WALKING

BY JOVANKA VUCKOVIC AND LAST CHANCE LANCE

In this magazine, Tom Savini should need little introduction. With four decades of genre films under his belt – both behind and in front of the camera – Savini has become the most recognizable special effects whiz in the business by popping up in cameo roles all over the map. He's appeared in George Romero's *Martin*, the original *Dawn of the Dead* (as well as the 2004 remake), *Knightriders* and *Land of the Dead* (where he reprised his role as the biker Blades from *Dawn*). He played Garbageman #2 in *Creepshow* and The Creep in its sequel, got creamed in Bill Lustig's *Maniac* (as Disco Boy!) and, of course, wowed viewers with his rapid-fire cock-and-balls as Sex Machine in the Rodriguez/Tarantino vampire flick *From Dusk Till Dawn*. Now, he puts down the deadly codpiece to don a badge and shotgun as Deputy Tolo in Rodriguez's segment of *Grindhouse*.

"I am no longer the competent, virile Sex Machine," Savini laments about the character. "I'm a bumbling, clumsy sidekick to Michael Biehn's sheriff."

In *Planet Terror*, Savini plays a Mexican law enforcer with a handlebar mustache in a Southern town which becomes overrun by zombies after a military commander (played by Bruce Willis) accidentally releases a toxic chemical agent that turns the locals into flesh-hungry "sickos." Tolo and a small group of survivors, including a one-legged stripper named Cherry (Rose McGowan), team up to stave off the invading zombie horde. The role, originally scripted as nothing more than a small death cameo, was later developed into a larger comic relief character.

"I never felt Tolo would be a bumbling idiot, but it was something that just happened during filming when I tripped accidentally and Robert and Quentin loved it," Savini says.

He may be bumbling, but as any Savini fan worth their weight in squibs knows, when he takes on a role, there's bound to be a lot of blood.

"There's a lot of gunplay," Savini confirms. "I have this unique way of punching zombies: I punch them with my gun and when I hit them I fire the gun at the same time so I'm punching and firing holes through these sickos. We don't call them zombies, we call them 'sickos,' 'cause they're not back from the dead, they're just fucked-up people. And I can't even begin to describe the way these 'zombies' are killed and the way they look. You've never seen sickos/zombies like this."

Considering he's killed and been killed onscreen by just about every kind of zombie, vampire and homicidal maniac possible, it's hard to imagine a death scene that would trump his previous exits. But Savini's quick to assure, "Fuck, in *Dusk Till Dawn* I turned into a big rat and exploded! But I have a tremendous death in *Grindhouse* that will top them all."

In fact, Savini's been so prolific when it comes to movie killing, he's presently editing a short film that will be available on his website (savini.com) called *The Many Deaths of Tom Savini*, which proves the man's the King of Killing.

"As an actor, I've died many movie deaths, but as a director and special makeup f/x artist, I've caused many, many more," he says with pride. "That's what this film is, just one death after another, it's a gore-fest."

With his short and other upcoming projects keeping him busy, Savini says he's most excited about the release of *Grindhouse*, in part because of the film's authenticity as an exploitation picture.

"I used to go to those cinemas on 42nd Street in New York where you would go and see a double feature, cartoons and previews... forget the titles, you just walked into a movie theatre that smelled like piss and the film was all fucked up with holes and burns and sprockets and jumps," he recalls, praising Rodriguez's painstaking efforts to duplicate those grubby old pictures by degrading his footage with lines, scratches, jumps, cuts and more.

"In fact, the scene where we're all gearing up with all our guns and stuff to go out and wipe out these zombies – the film breaks after the fight," reveals Savini before chiming in one final note about *Grindhouse* as a whole. "No one has ever seen anything like this, this is the horror movie everyone has been waiting for."



WHO BETTER TO TELL US WHAT 42ND ST. WAS *REALLY* LIKE BACK IN ITS FILTHY, CRIME-SATURATED HEYDAY THAN NEW YORK NATIVE AND DIRECTOR OF *MANIAC*, WILLIAM LUSTIG?

BORN INTO GRINDHOUSE

BY JOVANKA VUCKOVIC

Forty Second Street as he knew it may be gone, but New York's notorious avenue of depraved cinema survives in the stained memories of William Lustig, former pornographer and exploitation filmmaker, who now heads up Blue Underground, a DVD distribution outfit specializing in horror and sex cinema. Lustig tells us what it was like to be there in the rat-infested thick of it all.

A lot of people toss around the word "grindhouse," but they don't always know what it means. Tell us, for the record, what the term encapsulates.

The term "grindhouse" was used because they would be showing movies from the morning to the very wee hours of the [next] morning. So they looked at it as kind of *grinding* the movies, going constantly from about 8:30 a.m. until about three or four a.m. That's kind of where the term was used, for those kinds of cinemas. Then it went a little broader to mean cinemas that showed a kind of B-movie. They were big city cinemas that were rather rundown and were showing cheap exploitation films. What made these cinemas so interesting to go to is that they were some of the most glorious cinemas of their day. These were beautiful, ornate places that had seen better days and were really on the verge of either becoming multiplexes or being torn down.

Forty Second Street has largely been considered grindhouse ground zero. Would you agree?

Definitely, 42nd Street was the Mecca. There were ten cinemas in one block. Normally in downtown areas there would be, like, one. You had the Adams and the Fox in Detroit, there were a few in Chicago, there were a few in LA on Hollywood Blvd., but the legendary ones were [in Manhatten] on 42nd Street.

When did you discover the lurid pleasures of 42nd Street?

I was going down to 42nd Street when, god, I was thirteen or fourteen-years-old. My father worked at a company on 66th street and Broadway, so I would wander down there. I was a New York City street kid so back then it was no big deal. I mean, my family would have been shocked and appalled if I told them I was going to 42nd Street to see movies because it was a rough, dangerous place to go, but it was where I saw all the best movies of my life. Now keep in mind, 42nd Street would play all kinds of movies; there was one cinema that played westerns and another that played art house stuff like, let's say, Fellini's *Satyricon*. There was another theatre that showed first-run, another that showed just horror films and of course there were the erotic films, so it was a mixture.

Just how dangerous were these places?

The lights never went out in these places, I mean people would sleep in there. They had actual security guards on duty, not teenaged ushers, because of all the crazy shit that went down.

You mean people doing drugs and drinking?

Shit, if you were doing drugs and drinking, you were the good guys! We're talking about violence, muggings, all sorts of shit. There was a huge scandal because a child was abducted from the bathroom at one theatre while *Maniac* was screening there. I remember reading all kinds of stuff about it being because of the type of person my film would draw to the theatre. But the places *were* really dirty; you'd have to lift your legs up all the time to keep rats from gnawing at your feet and once in a while a cat would run by – they kept them in there to chase down the rats. And a few times during the screening someone would come down the aisles and spray the audience with air freshener. I mean, it was crazy. So sex and drugs were nothing in places like that.

Speaking of sex, tell me about your pseudonym Billy Bag, who made a couple of skin flicks – Hot Honey and The Violation of Claudia.

I started working on adult movies in New York back in 1972. I was seventeen-years-old. I was working on the hardcore adult movies because back then they were shot on 35mm and they were using the same crews that were also shooting what were the exploitation films, so it was not as segregated from a production standpoint as it is today. I remember the first adult [movie] I worked on, I think it was called *Hidden Erotica* or something

like that. The crew had just come off the movie *Super Fly* so I heard all about the difficulties [with] that while I was working on my first adult movie, so it was a great learning experience. At the golden age of 21 I directed my first adult movie, which was *The Violation of Claudia*.

Did the grindhouse circuit in New York inform your decision to move on from smut and make Maniac?

Absolutely. *Maniac* is a product of the grindhouses. It was the kind of movie that I knew would fit that market. See, here's the thing about grindhouses: 99 percent of the time the films that were promoted never delivered on what they were promoting. I mean that was just a fact. I said, well, what if you actually make what the poster promises? It was that simple. [Laughs] For me, *Maniac* was the movie that was totally informed by my experience on 42nd Street because remember one thing: on 42nd Street, when they would play a thriller and they would cut away from the murder sequences to, let's say Arthur Kennedy guest starring as a cop, okay, well, everybody gof up and got their popcorn because they knew that for the next few minutes, there would be this cop doing all this exposition that they didn't give a shit about! It would give them enough time to go get their popcorn and their hot dogs and they would come back and – ooh, wow – we're back to the murders again. What I did with *Maniac* is I cut out all that shit! The movie became a film which kept you in your seat; it had no brains, it was a film which didn't have that guest star doing that exposition, there was no exposition. It was an unvarnished killer-on-the-loose movie.

Would you like to see the grindhouses make a return?

I think it's impossible. Those kinds of movies don't exist anymore. The films that played on 42nd Street sadly gave way to films that went directly to video in the '80s, and now [they're] the films going directly to OVO. There's just no longer a [theatrical] market for these kinds of films.

Did you decide to move into distribution because of that?

In part, yes. I felt that at a certain point when my films were going directly to video that I no longer had a connection to the audience. When I was doing films like *Maniac Cop* and *Relentless*, these films were all played theatrically, and I got to sit with the audience and that to me was my satisfaction in making a film – to watch an audience react to it. To make a film and have it go straight to video is like a tree falling in a forest. Maybe I have to change my sensibility, but it was good to see that what I hoped had paid off.

To this day Maniac is still reviled by many critics as "vile and repulsive," "completely devoid of any moral perspective" and "a film that revels in its sleaziness." Do you think those views work in the film's favour as a grindhouse flick?

To quote one of my distributors when I suggested we take out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* for the opening of *Maniac*, he said, "Lustig, your audience either lives *on* or *under* the New York Times!" I don't think these reviews really affected *Maniac* at all.

What do you think about the upcoming Quentin Tarantino/Robert Rodriquez film Grindhouse?

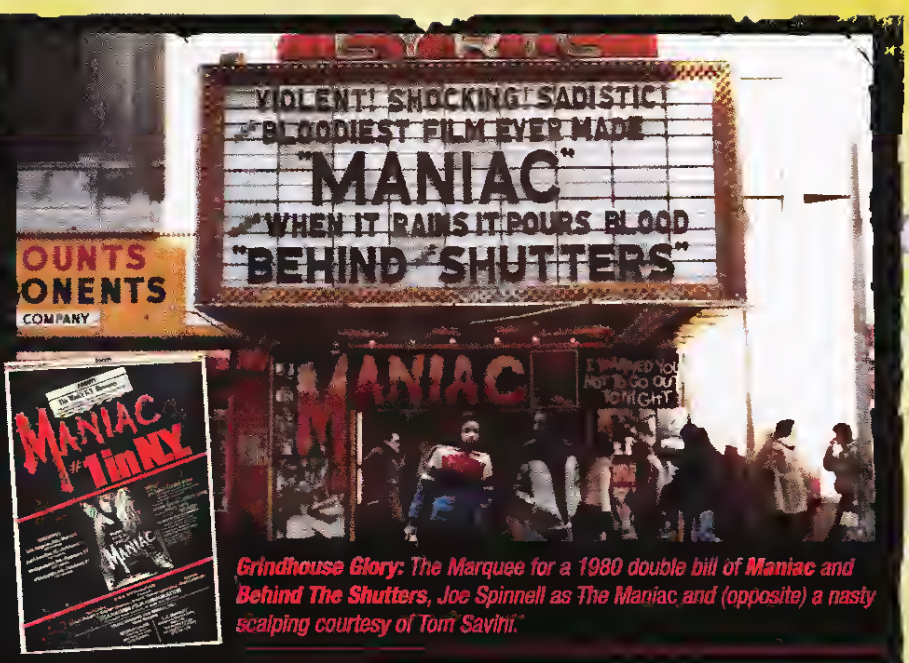
I'm curious to see it. ... I mean, the whole idea is that the films that played on 42nd Street just did nof deliver. If you come up with something that really delivers, then what you have is *Jaws*. *Jaws* was, for all intents and purposes a Roger Corman film that really delivered. So why go and make something that delivers and then try to distress it and make it feel like it's something old. I dunno, it's kind of odd to me. It will probably be amusing and an interesting experiment but I just think that the grindhouse exploitation [movies] were what they were. They were films that were challenged in a lot of ways – budgetary and creatively.

It does seem ironic that they have mega-dough to make a movie that's an homage to movies that were made for coffee money.

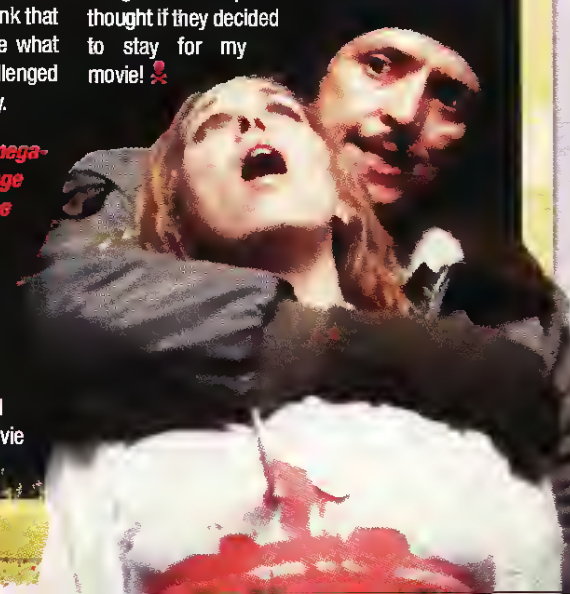
We made *Maniac* for $48,000. That's probably what they're going to pay for catering on *Grindhouse*! The other thing was, if you saw a star in a movie that was playing on 42nd Street, you inevitably felt that the star would never roll around In the mud. You'd know the movie would be a "polite" horror movie because it had stars in it. Whereas if you had a movie that didn't have stars in it, they would amp up the violence, the gore and the sex. You always looked forward to seeing those kinds of films because you knew they were really gonna deliver, like the *Texas Chainsaws* or the *Last House on the Lefts*. So I only wonder if the stars they have In these films are going to get down and dirty in them. It's to be seen.

They're going for the entire double bill experience, trying to recreate that feeling for people who never had the chance. To wrap this up, give me one quick 42nd Street story about double bills.

Man, that's what they always played – double bills. They'd play them over and over again all day and night. In fact, here's a funny story for you: I remember one theatre that actually played a double bill of *Maniac* with – believe it or nof – *E.T.*! I can only imagine what parents thought if they decided to stay for my movie!



Grindhouse Glory: *The Marquee for a 1980 double bill of* ***Maniac*** *and* ***Behind The Shutters****, Joe Spinnell as The Maniac and (opposite) a nasty scalping courtesy of Tom Savini.*



EXPLOITATION ENCYCLOPEDIA

NIGHTMARE USA

Stephen Thrower
FAB Press

At the beginning of the 1970s, relaxed censorship laws inadvertently fertilized a brave new wave of wild cinema we call the exploitation film, and by the late '70s, drive-ins and "grindhouses" all over America were choked with wonderfully bombastic, bloody, booby-filled alternatives to the mainstream. And while some of these titles have been celebrated over the years, many have also been lost in time, like the cinemas that once screened them.

In a new 528-page shelf-crusher titled *Nightmare USA*, genre authority Stephen Thrower (also contributing to this month's cover story) explores the movement that gave rise to influential indies like *Blood Feast*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Last House on the Left*, *Martin* and *Deathdream*, as well as lesser-known screamers such as *I Drink Your Blood*, *The Love Butcher* and even *Deathbed: The Bed That Eats*.



Compiling five years of research, Thrower (author of the acclaimed *Beyond Terror: The Films of Lucio Fulci*) takes on the unenviable task of chronicling countless subterranean genre films. As the author admits, for all its content, *Nightmare USA* cannot be called a definitive examination of exploitation cinema, as there certainly were qualifiable entries screening as far back as the 1930s. Rather, he refers to the book as a beginning, not an end, focusing on the period between 1970 and 1985, a time which Thrower says tended "toward greater visceral extremes and a greater flexibility of form."

As such, the book (available at fabpress.com) is divided into three parts. The first, a 2500-word essay titled "The Exploitation Independents," examines the events and people that gave rise to the movement, from H.G. Lewis to Romero and beyond. Section two focuses its attention on specific directors and films, while the tail end reviews about 175 movies, complete with select interviews, unpublished stills, posters, press books and behind-the-scenes photographs from the filmmakers' own collections. If you're interested in learning the back story behind Quentin Tarantino/Robert Rodriguez's *Grindhouse*, or better yet, want to educate yourself about one of the most controversial periods in horror film history, *Nightmare USA* is the absolute best place to start.

Jovanka Vuckovic



Dr. William Block (Josh Brolin) and Dr. Dakota Block (Marley Shelton) tussle in a hair-pulling scene.

more like a horror film because uh... well... I guess it could happen! [Laughs] Because his is a terror film, it's a realistic slasher-type movie. But they're such completely different movies. That was what was great about whenever he would show a double feature, it'd be two completely different movies back-to-back.

Was the "grindhouse look" achieved strictly in post-production?
For mine, yeah. Mine was shot in digital.

What techniques did you use to degrade the film to achieve that look?
Oh, top secret stuff that we've been fooling around with since the beginning. Actually, I told Quentin, "I'm gonna make it look like one of these movies that you showed to me but I'm gonna shoot digital," and he said, "Wow, if you could do that, that would convince me that digital is a really viable medium." So the next week I brought him a test – some footage from *Sin City* and *Dusk Till Dawn*, aged down – and he was just really blown away, so I thought, "This is the look. We'll just continue from there developing it."

Do you expect to have any problems with the MPAA?
I don't think so 'cause sort of the idea behind making these old film prints is that if they did have a problem, we'd just splice it out – put a big splice in there deliberately so people could tell the film broke at some point and that they're missing some information that they'll see later in the longer cut.

Tell me about this massive book from your company, Troublemaker Publishing, that's going to accompany the film?
For *Dusk Till Dawn*, I think we just did a copy of the script and storyboards or something, but this is a bigger book, more like the *Sin City* one.

The horror genre is in a retrospective phase at the moment. Sometimes it's in a phase where it's offering new ideas, but really, for the past five years, it's been hell-bent on retelling the '70s. Why do you think that is?
I dunno, I don't really know.

But what you're doing is taking something old and making it new, as opposed to simply remaking something classic.
Yeah, it's sort of like *Sin City* where you could say it's like film noir from the '50s, but it's completely foreign when you watch it. That's kind of what we're doing here. We took inspiration from those movies but they never really had the time or the budget to be able to deliver on their posters that they had, that sold the movies as something really spectacular and ours are going to do that. We're really gonna deliver on what we promised.

Has anyone ever approached you to do a remake?
Not really, people know that I write my own material so they don't bring me that stuff too often.

You hinted at this being the "first one" earlier. Do you see Grindhouse as a franchise?
Oh, absolutely. We could even take the trailers that we did between the movies and make features from them and say Grindhouse Presents. *Machete!* [Rodriguez's faux trailer] Straight-to-video or internationally or go out theatrically. We could do any number of things with other double features as we go on. ☠



Photos courtesy of Dimension Films. Photographer: Rico Torres



HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS, "GRINDHOUSE GHOULIE" CREATOR, TELLS US WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE PART OF THE ORIGINAL EXPLOITATION FILM CIRCUIT. *RUE MORGUE* PROUDLY PRESENTS AN EXCLUSIVE ARTICLE FROM THE GOOFATHER OF GORE.

HOW TO MAKE AN EXPLOITATION FILM

BY HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS

A lot of years ago, my partner Dave Friedman and I had a lot of fun making a lot of movies that played in a lot of theatres and gave a lot of people a lot of entertainment. That's a lot of "lots." Our early output actually predated what contemporaries call "grindhouse" theatres, yet we helped establish the genre. Some of the devices we used still exist, and if a producer ever gets together with me to make *Grim Fairy Tales*, I'll personally and absolutely re-establish grindhouses.

To make a grindhouse film – and beyond that, to find a theatre that would risk being called a grindhouse, in which the film would show to what we charitably might call an "alternative audience" – took a considerable amount of guts. Not because these zero-budget non-epics were difficult to write, produce or edit, but because those of us who operated outside the mainstream were regarded as outlaws.

In fact, we rode the third rail. Often our ads were so spicy or so suggestive the local paper would yank them. Often our films were so on the edge a projectionist would cut frames out of them (we assumed it was to take the snips home). Now and then an officer of the law would suggest the theatres that screened them either close down for the night or find another movie.

Occasionally we got hate mail. One batch came in almost as a consignment, from a single city. We wondered how they knew where we were, because except for distributors and theatre owners, we were deliberately invisible; somebody had squealed, probably under torture. Every letter referred to us in a half-literate way as "you wreckless men." We weren't wrecked by that reckless accusation, but threats were included, and as I remember, Dave handed over what was a beautiful example of uneducated wreckage to the authorities. Ah! Threats! Now, that's proof of showmanship!

Wandering onto our own un-level film playing field, "and where did that piece of crap play?" a studio-related scoffer would scoff. Dave and I usually chuckled, because more often than not the mocker was a producer or director or actor or distributor whose film, costing anywhere from ten to 50 times as much as ours, had a lesser payoff.

What was the difference between a successful engagement in a grindhouse and a flop? In one word: showmanship. After a great many years of watching the giants stumble, I'm still nonplussed that so many contemporary films lack the three elements that, in concert, define showmanship.

The first element is the film's title. Some of today's titles defy logic. Theatre chains shrug. Video rental stores may stock them, and they'll sit on the shelf, occasionally picked out by a passerby. Excitement? What's that? The second element is the trailer, which we called "the coming atrocity." We learned early on that the trailer can easily be more significant in getting bodies in seats than the film itself. After all, once they plop down they've already paid. The job, from a showman's point of view, is done. The third element is the group of ancillaries – the press book, especially a startling one-sheet and some ads that would leap out of the Friday newspaper... and the gimmicks, such as a comic book or paperback book or barf-bag or tiny cachet of "blood" or an ambulance parked outside with Mars-light flashing.

Oh, other bits and pieces existed. But with those elements in place, we knew some theatres would play our pictures and some adventurous souls would in fact pay a quarter or half a dollar or, if the theatre saw big action, the quickly-raised-to-$1.00 price of admission.

Today, it's even easier. When I directed *Blood Feast II* (see *RM#25*) a couple of years ago – and thank you, Jacky Morgan, for hiring me and giving me the most exhilarating experience I'd had in years – I was struck by how much easier filmmaking has become. The cameras are better, the film is faster, the action is recorded on both film and tape, microphones are easily hidden, lights aren't as clumsy... what a pleasure!

But showmanship? I admit it's a guess, but my guess is that at least half the producers don't have a clue as to what makes their finished product attractive to a distributor, who then would make it attractive to theatres, video outlets, or both, any of which would then make it attractive to the ultimate consumer.

Digital photography plus a readily available crutch, computer-generated imagery (CGI), have made feature filmmaking available to the proletariat. How many men, women, children and beasts of the field reading these words, are either planning, shooting or puzzling over a movie right now? Welcome to our world .. or to what's left of it. You do have a shot at fifteen minutes of fame, or even two hours of nightly nervousness. A modest proposal: Don't just excrete your movie. Release it .. with – right on, you're with us! – *showmanship*.



THIS YEAR, THE HARBINGERS OF DARK INDUSTRIAL MUSIC CELEBRATE THEIR SILVER ANNIVERSARY...

Skinny Puppy 25 Years of Aural Violence

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

PERFORMANCE PHOTOS BY KYLE CASSIDY

The trials and tribulations of electro-shock rock trailblazers Skinny Puppy are legendary – a wild, depraved haze of blood, drugs, death and rebirth that scratch Shakespearean in their dramatic extremities. The group formed in Vancouver in the early '80s when drummer cEvin Key (real name: Kevin Crompton) of new wave band Images in Vogue began hanging out with avant-garde poet Nivek Ogre (real name: Kevin Ogilve). As Skinny Puppy – whose name is inspired by the shaking dog prop in Disney's Haunted Mansion ride – they epitomized a generation of black-clad, disenfranchised youth looking to delve deep into the darkest mysteries of the human psyche while simultaneously shaking their asses on fog-fuelled dance floors. With Key's rabid, psychedelic compositions and Ogre's razor-gargled, treated vocals (not to mention the band's deliciously shocking, mud-caked, multimedia Grand Guignol stage shows), it was a no-brainer that Skinny Puppy would firmly worm their way into the hearts of counterculture cuties and progressive dark music fans across the globe with caustic albums such as *Bites*, *Cleanse Fold and Manipulate* and *VIVisectVI*.

Unfortunately, during the height of this success, the band was forced to take a near decade-long rest, precipitated by what can only be described as an absolute interpersonal meltdown. Skinny Puppy wouldn't return again until 2004, with the release of their widely acclaimed, politically charged comeback album, *The Greater Wrong of the Right*.

The latest effort, *Mythmaker*, is the group's 11th studio album, and it marks a return to the nightmarish, layered, corrosive sound that has made Skinny Puppy one of the most widely recognized purveyors and pioneers of quasi-industrial music, even though Key has never been particularly comfortable with the term.

"The word 'industrial' was never really relevant for us," explains the laid-back composer, taking a break in his LA home before the *Mythmaker* tour begins. "It's just a label, a word that was easily thrown about when journalists were asked to describe a band or sound. Really, the name 'industrial' came from the label that the band Throbbing Gristle created to release all of their material. And because there were so many bootlegs at the time, the thing was you were always on the lookout for a 'real' Throbbing Gristle 'industrial' album. But, I mean, since we began this thing – god, over 20-odd years ago, now – we have always just thought of ourselves as simply an electronic band."

The initial synthesizer and tape-loop collaboration in the summer of 1983 was never meant to be taken terribly seriously, though. The band was an experiment, an aural playground for the two artists to deconstruct the mainstream and create a new form of cinematically aware artistic expression removed from the pop music world that Key was increasingly disillusioned with.

"At the time, I wasn't really happy with Images in Vogue," Key says, "and I was starting to gravitate to my own music, and luckily, by some miracle or whatever, I was sitting there at a party and Ogre was there. Anyway, we started talking and he was this very eccentric, very intense guy. We started hanging out, found out we were both diehard horror movie fans and started staying up all night, doing crazy things – drugs, just fucking around. And of course, then, a lot of moments, moods and fons of samples from these weird movies made their way into the music."

After the cult success of their debut indie cassette *Back and Forth*, fledgling Vancouver record imprint Nettwerk commissioned a studio EP (incidentally, the first release from the influential label) called *Remission*, a six-track mash-up of thudding drum machine backbeats, doom-laden synth hooks, subversive film samples, satanic vocals and healthy doses of wanton nihilism. The album

proved to be an almost instant alternative dance club favourite.

"*Remission* was pretty huge," reflects Key. "We started playing at these electronic music festivals; I almost want to call them pre-raves, these not quite legal gatherings. [There were] lots of drugs and whatever, the beginnings of that culture anyway; we became pretty immersed in it. It was amazing just watching the people on the floor going crazy… like 'what is this shit?' We kind of just evolved with this scene."



Remission was followed by the even grimmer 1985 album *Bites*, which then led to 1986's ambitious *Mind: The Perpetual Intercourse*. Its lead single "Dig It" was the band's first taste of anything resembling a radio hit. During the *M:TPI* tour, however, Bill Leeb – Skinny Puppy's recently minted third member – unceremoniously left the band, citing, among other things, exhaustion. (Leeb would go on to form the popular industrial rock group Front Line Assembly and, later, the ambient world/pop outfit Delirium.) As a result, former Water member Dwayne Goettel was brought on board. While he was initially added as live support, the classically trained musician's role would quickly evolve to one of essential collaborator and right-hand man to chief composer Key. But the strain of stardom was starting to show and by the time the band had wrapped the ballistic 1987 aural horror movie *Cleanse Fold and Manipulate* (the track "Shadow Cast" heavily references Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* and "Tear or Beat" is rich with samples from Bill Lustig's *Maniac*) they had all begun gravitating towards harder drugs, with Key smoking heroin and Ogre becoming deeply ensnared in the first stages of what would become a corrosive battle with cocaine.

Nevertheless, whatever addictions and turmoils festered within the group (and perhaps, even because of them), Skinny Puppy's music just kept getting stronger, meaner, nastier and more confrontational. The 1988 release *VIVIsectVI* (a title that links vivisection with satanism) was a blistering, socially volatile effort, with the anti-animal experimentation track "Testure" getting international dance floor and alternative radio attention. This was also the first time the band aligned themselves with activist group PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). The tour for *VIVIsectVI* even infamously landed the band a night in a Cincinnati prison when an audience member mistook Ogre's slashing open of a dummy dog as the real thing and called the authorities.

"Yeah, that was weird," reflects Key of the incident. "We had this stuffed dog that we called CHUD, and Ogre would operate on it on stage, and then at the end of the show, Ogre would become the test subject while doctors vivisected him. Anyway, someone thought that CHUD was a real dog and that got around and the police came in to investigate. There were words, and we were brought in for being difficult or whatever and spent the night in jail."

The following year's electro-metal experiment *Rabies* (produced by Ministry's Al Jourgensen) was a brave, bombastic sidestep that spawned the single "Warlock" and its controversial music video, which featured rapid-fire, ultra-violent clips from such Eurohorror classics as *The Beyond*, *Suspiria* and the notorious Japanese *Guinea Pig* pictures. (The horror film genre has since returned that appreciation by using Skinny Puppy songs in movies such as *The Blair Witch Project*, *An American Werewolf in Paris*, *Underworld* and *Saw II*).

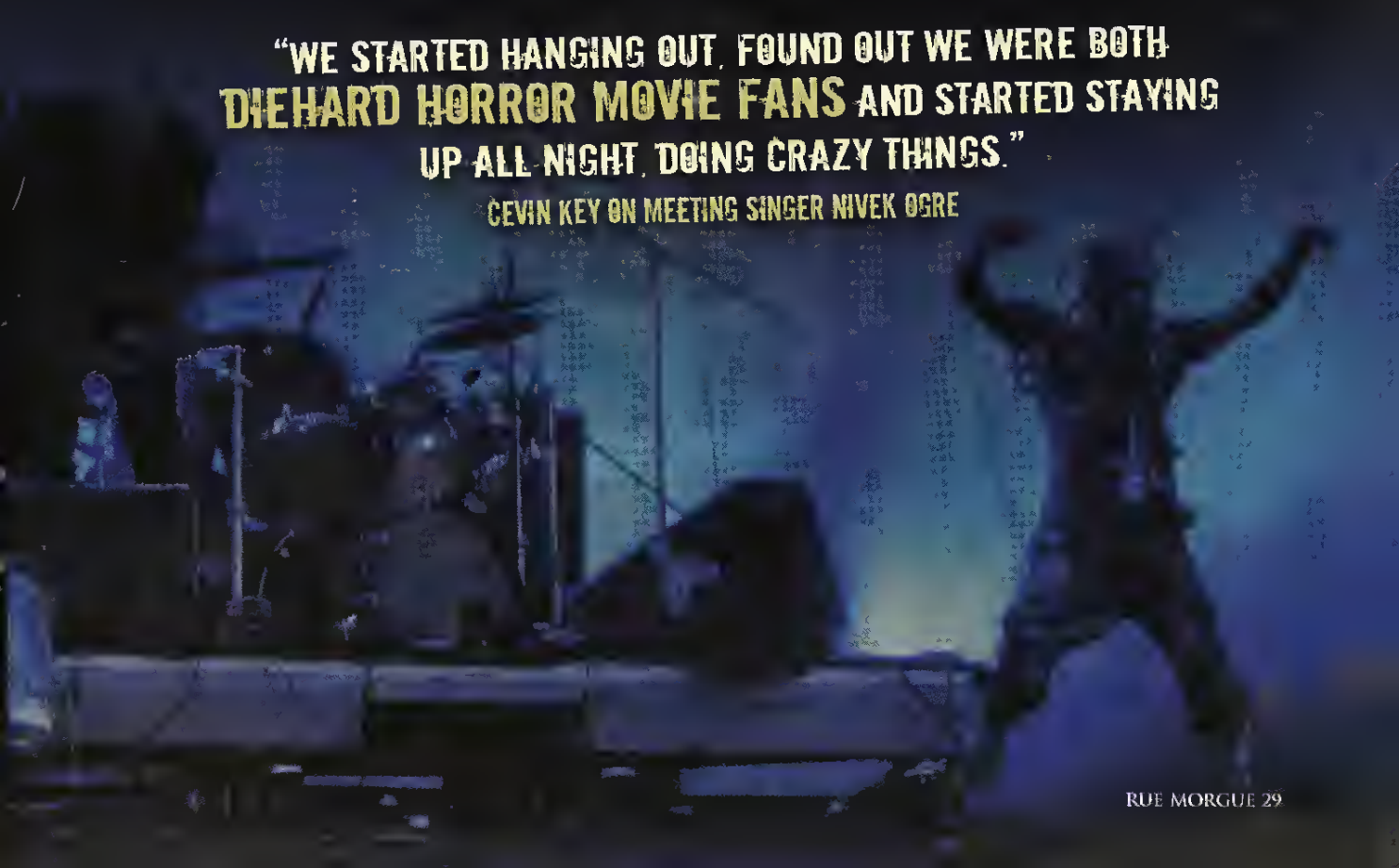
By 1991, when Skinny Puppy went into the studio to record their next album, *Last Rights*, it was clear that they had spiralled almost completely out of control.

"At that stage of the game we were at eight years of steady tounng – an album and tour per year – and we were totally feeling the pressure," says Key. "Things just got worse, Ogre had the psychosis that comes with coke, which *both* Owayne and Ogre were using. I had a lot of deaths around me at the time and was [doing drugs] just to keep it together. And when we made *Last Rights*, Ogre and I were barely speaking; we weren't even in the studio together. It was a bad situation."

Nevertheless, *Last Rights* (released in 1992) is arguably Skinny Puppy's masterpiece – a heaving, swirling miasma of violence and paranoia that challenged even the most adventurous listener. After wrapping the last leg of the tour – the likes

"WE STARTED HANGING OUT, FOUND OUT WE WERE BOTH DIEHARD HORROR MOVIE FANS AND STARTED STAYING UP ALL NIGHT, DOING CRAZY THINGS."

CEVIN KEY ON MEETING SINGER NIVEK OGRE





PREACHING DOOM 'N' GLOOM THROUGH SCARY MAKEUP, FAKE BLOOD AND A DIGITAL PROCESSOR, SKINNY PUPPY SINGER OGRE IS LARGER THAN DEATH. *RUE MORGUE* TALKS TO KEVIN OGILVIE, THE MAN BEHIND THE MYTH.

Ogre's Alter Ego

BY LISA LADOUCEUR

In the musical monster show that is Skinny Puppy, composer cEvin Key may be the mad doctor, stitching together sinister movie samples, concocting bone-rattling beats and working his audio alchemy on the final mix, but it's Nivek Ogre (a.k.a. Kevin Ogilvie) who is the star creature. On records, his provocative stream-of-consciousness lyrics aren't so much sung as spewed, coated in heavy effects processing and bile. On stage, well, let's just say his gore-soaked, politically charged performances cemented his rock star status for those of us who like our singers to swing intestines around instead of microphones. But like all good ghouls, Ogre is also sensitive and funny. From his home in Los Angeles, he reveals the motivation behind the new record, his scare tactics and... that voice.

Mythmaker *is your thirteenth record. Is that lucky or unlucky number thirteen?*
More lucky than unlucky, I would say. It means the worst is behind us.

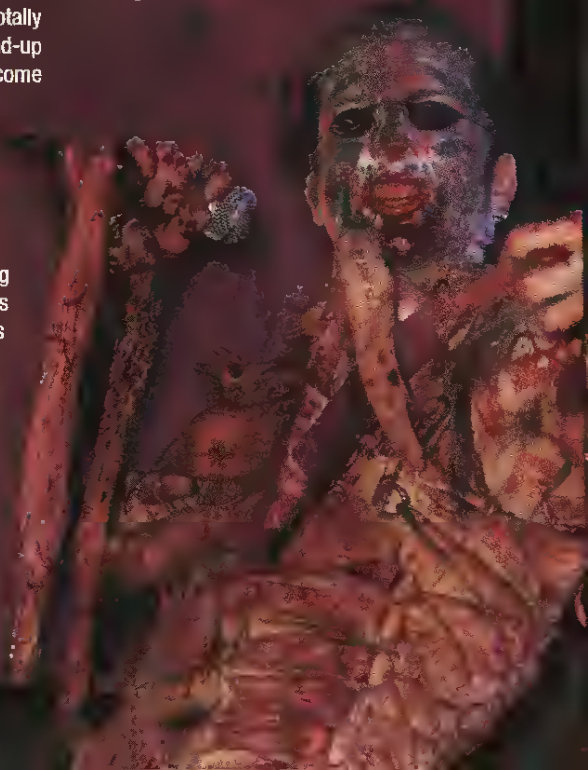
What does* Mythmaker *mean to you?
I came up with the title, thinking about us at 25-years-old. Certain things become mythologized after a certain amount of time. Whether it's a country doing something, creating a myth in order to promote some other agenda, or a person trying to demonize someone else by creating a horrible mythology about them. That led to the idea of control and it was a slippery slope downward from there.

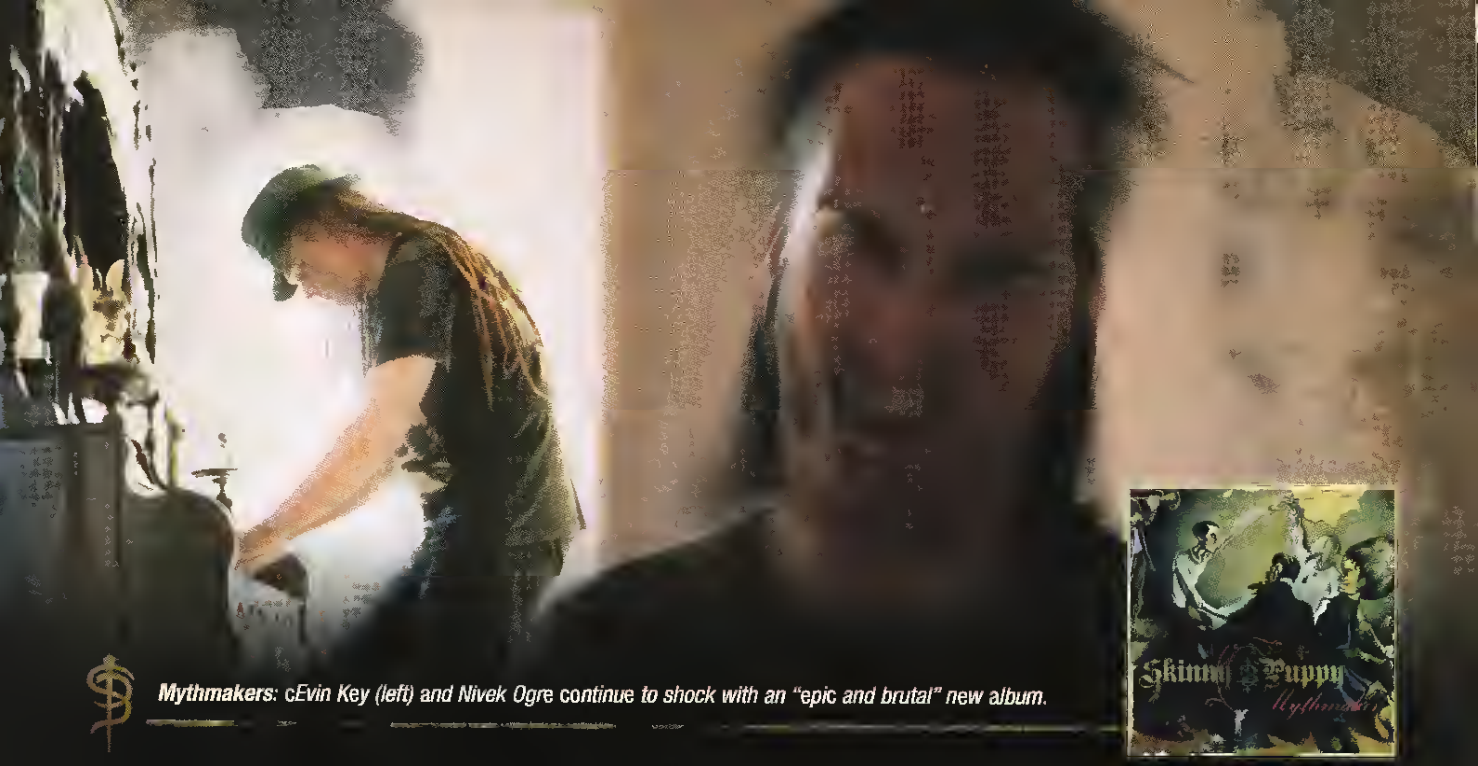
Why is it important to you to still use the Ogre persona after all these years?
I guess because it's become an alter ego. It's always been a separate entity, in a way. The voice creates the character and it's sorted through Kevin Ogilvie's emotions and dark dirty spots that he's still working on today. Ogre was kind of a more angry, externalized version of what anger felt [like] to me. It became a vent for a lot of that anger.

Are you trying to shock people?
Well, I think that's just there, within myself. I'm not trying to be that on purpose but I think it's something resonating from me, so people feel uneasy. I've never tried to be scary for scary's sake, *or* be a creepy voice. [Originally], I was trying to do something that was from a different realm, a whirling dervish, a scream from within. Not really localized, more of totally expressing something so incredibly wound-up tight, angry and hurt that it would just come out that way.

What is the scariest idea you're proposing on* Mythmaker*?
Well, I think that there are a lot of aspects of people's choices and what they choose to do without really knowing what it represents – or knowing, which is even scarier. How blindly we sometimes walk through uncharted and nasty, mine-laden landscapes. Things that we sometimes get don't end up being what we want. The idea of letting go, and not controlling, that's what the album is based on.

What's next for you?
Another OhGr [solo] record and some acting. I did an audition for *The Hills Have Eyes* remake. Although I had a good audition, I didn't get the part. And I was so bummed. I think I'd be really good to do stuff in makeup, under disguise. That's what I love about Skinny Puppy, the fact that I can use costuming and things to project an image.





***Mythmakers**: cEvin Key (left) and Nivek Ogre continue to shock with an "epic and brutal" new album.*

of which featured Dgre in a full rubber monster suit on stilts, ripping out his own guts and finally shooting himself in the head – the band accepted an offer from producer Rick Rubin's new American Recordings imprint, effectively ending their relationship with long-time label Nettwerk. The move proved to be a disastrous one: Rubin almost immediately began rejecting material that Key and Goettel were creating, urging them to make their sound more palatable for the masses in a vain attempt to mould Skinny Puppy in the image of the more mainstream Nine Inch Nails. Tensions within the band reached an apex, Dgre unofficially quit and then, in 1995, the ultimate tragedy came in the form of the drug-induced death of Goettel.

"No one really knew that Dwayne had deeper issues, that he was injecting heroin," Key reflects. "And when addiction becomes that much [of] a secret, you have real trouble on your hands. One day in the studio, his shirt sleeve fell open and he had these marks all over him and we were like, 'what the hell is going on with you?' He was living in a really bad situation, the people he was hanging around were bad people and he was so into the rave scene. I don't want to entirely blame that scene, but it *did* lead to the heavy drugs."

Reeling from the loss of his friend and creative partner, Key finished 1996's dramatic concept piece *The Process* on his own and it seemed as if the nearly dissolved Skinny Puppy had finally run its course. Key concentrated on his numerous solo efforts including Oownload, Ooubting Thomas, PlatEAU and The Tear Garden, while Ogre found vocal work with KMFDM and Martin Atkins' Pigface, eventually starting his own project, the cheeky electro-pop experiment ohGr. As the years passed however, fans became increasingly agitated and frustrated. They wanted Skinny Puppy back. In 2000, their prayers were answered.

A supposed one-off performance at the Doomsday Music Festival in Dresden, Germany reunited Key and Dgre, and after the dust had cleared, serious talks began about reforming the band. Key began writing songs and Dgre, along with frequent collaborator Mark Walk (*The Process* producer and now an official band member), wrote some typically non-linear lyrics and recorded some electronically altered vocals. The result was 2004's critically acclaimed comeback *The Greater Wrong of the Right*. Released on the German label Synthetic Symphony, the leaner and more focused album was solid but lacked the messy "sonic surrealism" that was Key and Dgre's calling card.

However, with their latest disc *Mythmaker*, it appears Skinny Puppy is back where it belongs: coiled deep in the shadowy recesses of visceral, violent explorations of the human condition. Tracks like the epic and brutal "Magnifishit," the skin-crawling "Dal" and the beautiful and utterly depressing "Haze" effectively mine the frenetic mood of classic Skinny Puppy albums like 1990's *Too Dark Park*, while simultaneously updating their sound for a new generation.

Key claims the move back to a more shocking Skinny Puppy was not a conscious one. "People seem to think that this is a darker album, but I don't think we set out to make it so. I just sort of went in and wrote a bunch of stuff that was coming out of me emotionally and maybe I brought out something that made the material more intense. I ended up giving Mark about 25 songs to choose from, to work on with Dgre. The ones he chose were good choices I think – a good balance between the melodic and a good dose of the original Skinny Puppy sound that may have been missing from the last record."

The renewed interest in the band has also quickened Key's passion for composing and creating new music. Last year saw him reconnecting with his long-dormant side project Oownload (with whom he had contributed to the score of Jim Van Bebber's modern nasty *The Manson Family*). Key feels that his work with the group is the closest he's ever come to creating jazz. Additionally, a new album is due out this fall from The Tear Garden, Key's collective with Edward Ka-Spel of The Legendary Pink Dots.

With the *Mythmaker* tour about to spread its bloody wings across the planet this month, Key feels, for the first time in a long time, ready to face the future.

"It's been a very enlightening time, and truthfully, I think I'm better now than I ever was," he says. "After Dwayne died, there was just this huge question mark over every move I made But now I feel good, I feel I have a real space that I can dwell in. Skinny Puppy has been this incredible trip, but god knows it was really tough there for a while."

BRACE YOURSELF FOR A LIST OF SKINNY PUPPY'S 25 MOST DISTURBING SONGS.

Greater Wrongs

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER AND LISA LADOUCEUR

1. SMOTHERED HOPE (1984)
This puppy proclaims (via Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*) that, "the world's a hell." What's that lingering knell? "It's my voice, my voice cries out obscenities..."



2. SOLVENT (1984)
A slow, steady electro-creeper that uses loops and Ogre's trademark zombie snarl to worm its way under your skin, then stay there and fester.

3. ASSIMILATE (1985)
An industrial-strength dance beat serenading modern plague, pestilence and annihilation. The sound of peeling scabs and "death, death, death!"

4. BLOOD ON THE WALL (1985)
Samples from *TCM* and Polanski's *The Tenant* turn this synth-pop number into a sweetly horrific prelude of the band's dark decade to come.

5. BURNT WITH WATER (1986)
Exorcise this! Predating the glitch music phenom by a decade, this seven-minute long instrumental cut-up uses an unholy mix of priestly incantation and precision click cuts to raze the dead.



6. THE CENTRE CULLET (1986)
In this hypnotic lullaby from Puppy's debut album *Bites*, *Friday the 13th*'s signature "ki ki ki ki, mah mah mah" is mixed in with Freddy-like laughter, to expectedly maniacal effect.

7. DIG IT (12" REMIX) (1986)
Possibly the best industrial club song ever crafted, an assault of mutated guitars and bludgeoning beats. "Do you hear it? Tha music, the band? Did somebody hear?" A generation of impressionable misanthropes did – Trent Reznor we're looking in your direction.

9. LOVE (1986)
When words just don't cut it, let *Legend of Hell House* speak for you. "All together, naked, drunk, clutching, sweating, biting." Romance, Hellmark style.

9. STAIRS AND FLOWERS (1986)
A low groan, a slow moan, ghostly static and a descent into utter despair.

10. ANGER (1987)
Exactly what its title promises, "Anger" is a blistering, blood-drooling beast driven by relentless percussion, shrieking vocals and obscure horror movie samples.

11. TESTURE (1988)
"I hope you make sure we're properly dead before you start, old Ripbeak!" This scary anti-animal experimentation-themed classic is even better in its 12-inch extended version. The infamous opening sample is from the animated parable *The Plague Dogs*.



12. VX GAS ATTACK (1990)
Pointed political commentary on the impending Iraq war, Puppy drops scary shit culled from newsreels over stomping military beats.

13. WHO'S LAUGHING NOW? (1900)
Proving that the band members were horror fans from the get-go, this schizophrenic industrial gem is splattered with samples from *Evil Dead II*, including "Who's laughing now?," "I hope you rot down there!" and "God forgive me for what I have unleashed!"

14. SQUENT (1989)
This seething, metal guitar-infused dance floor stomper is arguably the best track off tha controversial Al Jourgensen-produced *Rabies* album. Guaranteed to make you want to break something *over* someone.

15. SPAHN FARRE (LIVE) (1989)
A bonus track on the *Rabies* CD re-release only, this aggressive, free-form psychedelic guitar and vocal jam is hypnotic, raw, primal and atypical in that electronics are not the driving force.



16. WORLOCK (1989)
Its infamous video goading the MPAA with a barrage of banned clips from several Argento flicks, *Videodrome*, *Opera*, *From Beyond*, *Hellraiser* and many more was a valentine to their gore faves. Creepier still: the music

17. NATURE'S REVERRE (1990)
"Scared? Here we are... I'm not scared. Where are you?" A truly terrifying song from a truly terrifying album (*Too Dark Park*). Ogre's nerve-shredding whisper doesn't help ease tensions, neither does Dale Plevin's serpentine fretless bass. Listen with lights on...

19. RASH REFLECTION (1990)
Simply the single most sinister, reptilian tune there is. If viral infection had a sound, this would be it.

19. SPASMOLYTIC (1990)
A nightmarish, multi-layered, drug-fuelled portrait of urban decay and evil as only Skinny Puppy could create. Amazing cEVIN Key drum interlude as well.

20. THE KILLING GAME (1992)
A bleak, jet-black, apocalyptic funeral march of a track; beautifully orchestrated, with symphonic Morricone overtones set against grinding synth meltdowns.

21. KRONHERE? (1992)
Some say you can actually hear Ogre in the throes of a cocaine-induced seizure on the vocals. True or not, this black mass of extreme pain, suffering and madness is not for the squeamish.

22. LOVE IN VEIN (1992)
If you can survive this ear-shattering opening track from the crushing, oppressive *Last Rights*, then the rest of the platter should be a breeze. A song that could very well wake Cthulhu.

23. DEATH (1990)
"Spiky, Black, Hard Edged .." indeed. Puppy's pummelling yet oddly structured stab at hard metal is violent and awesome, like a rusty chainsaw to the spleen.

24. IMMORTAL (2004)
High-octane lead track from comeback album *The Greater Wrong of the Right*, this shows a leaner, cleaner but still carnivorous dynamic. If you haven't seen SP live, pick up the *TGWotR* live DVD to see a bloody, dog-masked Ogre prance around the stage belting this out.

25. HAZE (2007)
"Death is like the butterfly, can't escape the skyline." An arty, bombastic and emotionally devastating modern Puppy classic that is damn near operatic in its swelling sense of dark aural drama.


28
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COME ONE, COME ALL, TO **POOCH ISLAND** -
A CARTOONISH, MONSTER-PACKED ACRYLIC THRILL RIDE.

CARNIVAL MACABRE

by Kirsten Anderson

When it comes to Disneyland, two of the last people that jump to mind are Ray Harryhausen and H.P. Lovecraft. But in the wild paintings of Michael "Pooch" Pucciarelli, they come together almost as if they were meant to. A typical Pooch work depicts riotous "haunted attraction" motifs featuring Day of the Dead skeletons, monkey men or jack-o'-lanterns careening through roller coaster rides grandiosely bedecked in horror and dark pop culture imagery. Towering facades of devils, tikis and creatures of all stripes – including the cyclops from Harryhausen's *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, Universal's Creature from the Black Lagoon and Lovecraft's infamous tentacled Great Old One – loom surrealistically over the tiny riders, who look half-scared and half-ecstatic as their buggies swoop and twist through the tilted landscape.

Unsurprisingly, the Florida native draws much of the inspiration for his carnival macabre canvases from a childhood marked by rides on Disneyland's The Haunted Mansion and Pirates of the Caribbean.

"I'm attracted to haunted house-type rides as opposed to those based on speed and thrills," Pooch tells *Rue Morgue*. "I like the concept of a whole visual package you can be immersed in. The imagery I use is what I want to see in real life."

At the same time Pooch was being happily warped by repeated trips to Disneyland, he started avidly watching classic monster flicks such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, as well as newer genre films – thanks to understanding parents.

"*Re-Animator* came out and was considered pretty risky for its time," the artist recalls," but I got to go see it because my parents understood that I had a passion for this type of stuff and would find a way to create something out of it." In addition to film, Pooch also draws inspiration from genre literature, in particular the work of H.P. Lovecraft.

"I found H.P. Lovecraft by buying a book called *The Art of Weird Tales*," he says, "which had pen and ink drawings of pulp serials. I bought it to look at the art, but I was drawn in by Lovecraft's stories. They were so organic and horrible, and really stood out from everything else."

As such, the Dark Prince of Providence is a regular visitor in Pooch's paintings, whether as the subject of an entire ride ("Tunnel Of Lovecraft") or as a Halloween costume for his iconic creation.

But perhaps the best key to understanding the work of Pooch is his love of Ray Harryhausen.

"I really wanted to create stop-motion films when I was little because of Ray Harryhausen, but where I was in south Florida, there were no resources for me to do that," he explains. "So I started drawing what I wished I could see on







Visual Oddities: *(clockwise from top) Costume of Cthulhu (acrylic on masonite, 2005). Senorita Lockheart (acrylic on panel, 2005). Tunnel of Lovecraft (acrylic on canvas, 2005) and (opposite) Franken Tiki Island (acrylic on panel, 2005).*



"My paintings are very much 2-D versions of 3-D sets."
POOCH

film. In a way, my paintings are very much 2-D versions of 3-D sets that I see in my mind." "Harryhausen Land," a print of the artist's tribute to the film great, hangs in the entrance of Seattle's Sci-Fi Museum.

These thematic influences are rendered in a characteristic "lowbrow" style inspired by a spectrum of artists, from the grotesqueries of the legendary Robert Williams and R K. Sloan, to the elegant biomechanical nightmares of H R. Giger, to the outlander paradises of Frank Frazetta. As far as being christened "lowbrow" himself, Pooch, who exhibits at several respected galleries in North America, has no qualms about the label.

"It's fine, it's cool… what Robert Williams did is important [in the art world], and that scene and the people who like it would understand what I'm doing."

To view Pooch's paintings visit poochisland.com.



Rotten Rides: *3113 (acrylic on canvas, 2006) and (top) Harryhausen Land (acrylic on canvas, 2005).*

"THE KING OF ITALIAN HORROR DIRECTORS"

~ THE NEW YORK TIMES



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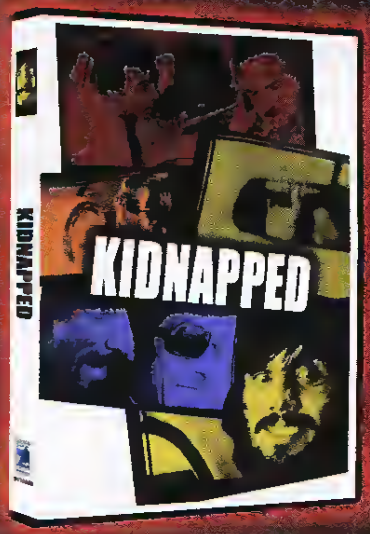


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KIDNAPPED AKA RABID DOGS

A gang of thieves hijacks a man's car after botching their getaway from a robbery, taking a woman prisoner along the way. Can the prisoners escape before it's too late?

AVAILABLE APRIL 3, 2007

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Lucky McKee and Angela Bettis trade director and actor roles for their latest collaboration, *Roman*, the heart-wrenching companion to *May*.

Love Will Tear Us Apart

by John W. Bowen



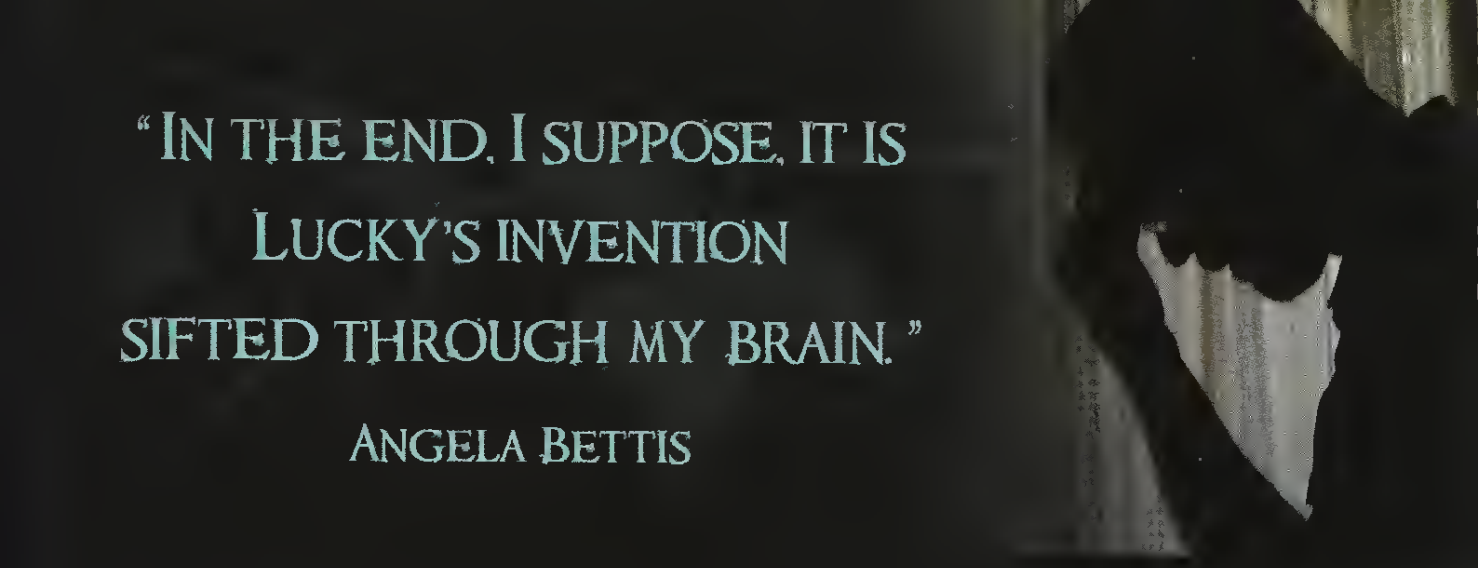
Between *May*, *The Woods* and his *Masters of Horror* episode *Sick Girl*, filmmaker Lucky McKee has established himself in recent years as our beloved genre's bard of the misfit, and actress Angela Bettis has frequently been the onscreen conduit breathing life into his desperately lonely and dangerously deranged characters. Their creative partnership and close friendship may not have as long and storied a history as, say, Scorsese and De Niro, but the chemistry is every bit as palpable. Now, in a move rarely precedented in film, their latest collaboration sees them trading hats, as Bettis directs McKee in the title role of *Roman*, a McKee-scripted film that could very well be described as *May*'s long-lost micro-budget brother.

Roman's titular character is, in some respects, even more of a misfit than May Canady. A welder who barely utters a word to his co-workers by day, Roman spends his downtime sitting in his drab apartment, pining for a beautiful neighbour he dare not approach. After a chance meeting, the woman (Kristen Bell, star of *Pulse* and TV series *Veronica Mars*) – whose real name we never learn, although Roman decides to call her Isis – indicates some reciprocation of interest. Such a turn of events would normally hint at a happy ending of some description, but in this case only foreshadows imminent disaster. In a scene that hearkens back to both *Straw Dogs* and *Of Mice and Men*, Roman inadvertently kills Isis while simply trying to get her to stay for dinner. He subsequently stores her body on ice in his bathroom, carrying on conversations with the corpse and even taking parts of it on Sunday outings in the sticks. But when yet another gorgeous neighbour – Eva (Nectar Rose), a death-obsessed hippie chick – begins pursuing Roman, things get considerably more complicated.



"If Roman were not close to me in some way, I probably would not have chosen to direct it," Bettis says of her attachment to McKee's dangerous but well-intentioned onscreen damage case. "But the character sprung completely and totally from Lucky's imagination. I simply tried to guide his arch and character through the story. In the end, I suppose, it is Lucky's invention sifted through my brain."

The storylines for both *Roman* and *May* evolved simultaneously, and both had early incarnations as shorts McKee made for film school, entitled *Cheezuboogu* (!) and *Fraction*, respectively. Between the titular characters' shared pathology and the carnage in their wake, these two lost souls really are inextricably intertwined. May crouches on all fours by the phone in her living room, waiting for the object of her affection to return her call; Roman sits at the window of his dark apartment drinking beer, smoking cigarettes and waiting for his dream girl to walk by every day at 5:33 p.m. Both develop "relationships" with corpses out of a particularly malignant strain of loneliness, a Jeffrey Dahmer-esque inability to establish relationships – romantic, platonic or even casually social – with



"IN THE END, I SUPPOSE, IT IS LUCKY'S INVENTION SIFTED THROUGH MY BRAIN."

ANGELA BETTIS

real live human beings. The most conspicuous difference between the two films is that in *May* we watch someone with only a tenuous grasp on reality spiralling farther out of control, while *Roman* shows us an insane person slowly regaining his sanity, albeit in the midst of a thoroughly bizarre situation.

"With *May* I felt I had explored those themes thoroughly enough and wasn't really interested in directing *Roman* afterwards," ex-pat Californian McKee explains from his new rural Oklahoma digs. "But I was very interested to see how another director would interpret my bizarre brand of romantic-horror-drama-lonely-whoozit stories. Angela and I had established such a strong creative and personal relationship that it just made sense for us to challenge each other in a different way. I'm glad we did. Making those two movies kind of puts the final stamp on something and shows the world that Angie and I are truly lost siblings."

On a budget Bettis describes as "couch change," *Roman* was shot on digital video over a total of 23 days in and around the LA apartment complex where she and McKee both lived at the time.

According to McKee, "Everyone was real cool. A big group of us all lived in that building, something like five or six apartments between us and our friends at a certain point. So if anyone tried to sass us we'd just gang up on them and beat them up. Only had to do it once and we dispatched that 94-year-old lady rather easily, to tell the truth."

Directorial inexperience wasn't particularly daunting for the more serious Bettis, who now says she can't decide whether or not she prefers acting: "I have directed theatre [but] never film before *Roman*. I am surrounded by a good number of creative folks, which has given me the opportunity to experiment with many aspects of filmmaking. I certainly lack knowledge and experience in the business side of the arts, though."

According to McKee, the critical success of *May* played an important role in getting *Roman* off the ground. "Yeah, I was pretty fortunate – notice I'm not using the word 'lucky'? – with the reviews and whatnot," he says. "I'm positive that had a direct influence on helping *Roman* along, though quite honestly, we just did it because we were sick of making films with assholes."

It's only natural that Bettis' directorial debut in a film scripted and produced by McKee would echo certain elements of his style, but *Roman* is unquestionably her own vision, with the most conspicuous stylistic differences evident in sound and lighting. Expectations have naturally been running high among the cult of *May*, although Bettis maintains this has never made her uncomfortable.

"The *May* fanbase, although rabid, is very warm and snuggly. I have felt nothing but support and excitement from the fans – very little pressure."

McKee, who crawls inside his character's skin with tremendous assurance, jumped on the opposite side of the camera despite having limited experience as an actor.

"We had a couple of acting classes in film school," he says, "but most of my acting experience comes from acting in friends' films. All my friends are directors, so I've been thrown into a few things here and there. No theatre for me; I have terrible stage fright, I hate getting up in front of people."

Among favourite previous efforts as an actor, he cites a "bizarre" short by *Brick* director Rian Johnson entitled *Last Ditch* ("Oh yes, Lucky with a terrible British accent and a mohawk. Good shit!" he laments).

By all accounts, *Roman*'s location shoot proved mercifully free of the usual pitfalls. So just how serious is this newfound thespian bent?

"Garsh, I don't know! If someone thinks I fit something, I'll probably do it," he surmises, adding, "It's not something I'm pursuing every day and for a real actor I think that's what it takes. By now, however, I've become extremely cocky and find myself continually sending tapes of me performing Henrik Ibsen monologues to Michael Bay and Eli Roth. No response yet. I'll let the world know when, and if, they get back to me."



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300: Frank Miller's source material come to life.

PREPARE FOR GORY!

300

Starring Gerard Butler, Lena Headey and Dominic West
Directed by Zack Snyder
Written by Zack Snyder, Kurt Johnstad and Michael B. Gordon
Warner Bros. Pictures

Visually stunning and exhibiting a high artistic style best described as Goya-esque, *300* plays out like a page from its Frank Miller source material come to life. Intense, hyper-violent, and with more gore than one would expect from a historical offering, the film is pitch-black from the opening shot of a mound of human skulls to the inevitable corpse-strewn finish.

Like Miller's graphic novel, which it follows closely, *300* is a cinematic retelling of the real-life Battle of Thermopylae, which took place in 480 BC during the Greco-Persian Wars. Of course, certain liberties have been taken and everything has been grossly exaggerated, from the larger-than-life battles to the monstrous human deformities.

Essentially the story of King Leonidas I's last stand, *300* begins with a brief introduction to the harsh training the future king received as a young Spartan, then leaps ahead many years to the days leading up to the aforementioned battle. Leonidas (Gerard Butler in a standout performance) learns that thousands of Persians are converging in the Gulf of Malis, preparing to invade if he refuses submission – which he does by throwing the Persian messengers down a deep well. When he approaches the Ephors (a group of grotesquely diseased priests) for permission to lead the Spartan army into battle, he is denied. Regardless, he and 300 march to intercept the Persian forces.

Director Zach Snyder (*Dawn of the Dead* remake) comes into his own here with a fluid combination of style and substance (though credit for this must also go to Miller), proving he's capable of more than MTV-style edits and mindless action. Horrifying visuals, such as dozens of rotting bodies nailed to a tree or Spartans using Persian corpses as mortar to build an impenetrable wall, are as shocking as they are captivatingly poetic. A truly exceptional example (as *Sin City* was before it) of what a screen adaptation of a graphic novel should be

Monica S. Kuebler

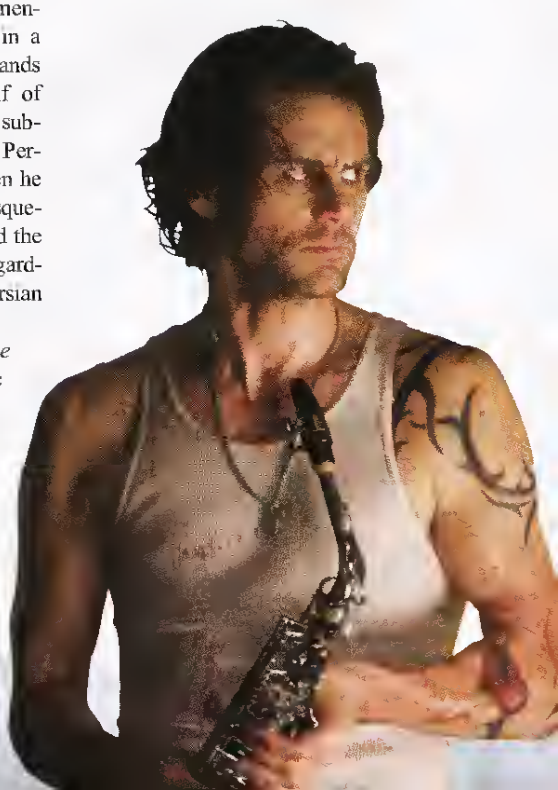
DAMNABLE DIGITS

THE NUMBER 23

Starring Jim Carrey, Virginia Madsen and Logan Lerman
Directed by Joel Schumacher
Written by Fernley Phillips
New Line Cinema

The knives were out for *The Number 23* even before its release, with the interwebs abuzz about its profound badness. "Professional" critics confirmed the opinions of the online amateurs opening weekend, with the likes of *Newsweek*'s Jan Stuart claiming that the title "gives a rough estimate of the years it will take stars Jim Carrey and Virginia Madsen to live it down." But *The Number 23*, while sometimes annoying, inappropriately sentimental and downright stupid, is far from the disaster it's been painted as.

Carrey stars as Walter Sparrow, a dog catcher who loses his grip on reality after his wife



Agatha (Madsen) buys him a book titled *The Number 23*. The novel tells the story of Detective Fingerling, whose life spirals into paranoia after a suicidal woman he was counselling kills herself. Walter starts drawing parallels between his life and Fingerling's, and begins to see the number 23 literally everywhere. Agatha dismisses her husband's ranting, but it's soon clear – to Walter at least – that Fingerling's life is based on his own. Except Fingerling's numeric obsession boiled over into murder. Will Walter's?

Stylistically, director Joel Schumacher leans towards the darkness of his moralistic snuff film-themed *8MM*. Clear parallels are drawn between Walter and Fingerling (whose story is brought to life in effective noirish vignettes) by utilizing the same washed-out palette for both narratives. Schumacher also packs his frames with subtle "23" references to illustrate Walter's degenerating sanity.

As for Carrey, the rubber-faced comedian has wisely tempered his schtick and dropped the mugging for this role. Indeed, the excessive elements in *The Number 23* can be pinned on screenwriter Fernley Phillips. The whole "23" thing gets annoying quickly, there's a lack of character motivation and the obligatory twist ending is too reminiscent of the Boris Karloff chiller *The Haunted Strangler* to be wholly original. The result is an entertaining but messed-up mystery with uneven thrills.

Sean Plummer

NOT SHAUN, BUT STILL KILLER

HOT FUZZ

Starring Simon Pegg, Nick Frost and Bill Bailey
Directed by Edgar Wright
Written by Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright
Rogue Pictures

Okay, you're probably wondering why we're reviewing a cop comedy buddy picture in *Rue Morgue*. To be honest, if the guys behind it hadn't been responsible for 2004's brilliant slapstick British zombie comedy, *Shaun of the Dead*, we probably couldn't make much of a case. But it's our duty, nevertheless, to point you to their newest film, a hilarious send-up to police action films such as *Super Cop* and *Bad Boys 2*, fuelled by British black humour and a few cartoonish but great gore gags.

Simon Pegg stars as Sergeant Nicholas Angel, an overachieving cop who's transferred to the small town of Sandford because he's making the rest of his team look bad. Upon his arrival, he arrests an inebriated driver whom he finds out the next day is his new partner, Constable Butterman (played by *Shaun*'s Nick Frost in an equally goofy role), a lager-loving junk food addict who's desperate for high-octane cop action. And when a series of bizarre "accidents" befall the local townsfolk, Butterman gets his wish.



Hot Fuzz: *The* ***Shawn of the Dead*** *team crank out another British black comedy*

Here, the film switches into comedic murder-mystery mode, not unlike *Serial Mom* or *So I Married An Axe Murderer*, as the ill-fit duo pursue a mysterious killer dressed as Death, who's decapitating, garden shearing, impaling and absolutely crushing people with reckless abandon. Angel suspects grocery store owner Simon Skinner, but the sleepy constabulary isn't buying it, and instead pokes fun at their new big city Sergeant's overactive imagination, qualifying the bloody murders as unfortunate happenstance.

What follows, of course, is more action and comedy than horror but with the wild collisions, murderous conspiracies, a secret cult with a Lurch-like ghoulish henchman and the aforementioned bloodplay, *Hot Fuzz* is no less worthy of coverage in this magazine than the *Scary Movie* films. The difference is, *Hot Fuzz* is actually worth your money and time spent.

Jovanka Vuckovic

MEMOIRS OF A TEENAGED CANNIBAL

HANNIBAL RISING

Starring Aaron Thomas, Gaspard Ulliel and Richard Leaf
Directed by Peter Webber
Written by Thomas Harris
MGM

Thus far, the central complaint about *Hannibal Rising* – movie or book – is always the same: does it matter why Dr. Hannibal Lecter does what he does? Do we want to know the root of his psychosis, or do we prefer to think of him the way Will Graham does in *Red Dragon* – as a monster whose essential alienness simply happens to lie on the inside rather than the out?

Some might say the damage was done back in *Hannibal* the book, when Thomas Harris effectively turned Lecter into Dracula by slipping in a back story that made him a former Lithuanian count whose anthropophagic fetish began when WWII scavengers ate his little sister, Mischa.

Startlingly, the novel *Hannibal Rising* (which expands on said back story, adding erudite Charles Bronson moves and a sexy Japanese aunt-in-law) is slim, but good. Harris displays his usual poetic flair with gruesome imagery, and proto-Hannibal's journey from semi-justified teenage avenger to compulsive human-hunter whose cold pulse never rises above 74, is genuinely harrowing. Those who dismiss the book as an attempt to "redeem" Lecter should note his eventual triumph is not actually presented as a happy ending, especially since we already know where things go from here.

In terms of the movie, however, director Peter Webber (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*) obviously doesn't know how far to go with this flagrantly operatic material. What we end up with is restrained in ways that will alienate fans of the franchise without winning new converts. It's sombre, classy, well-acted, even entertaining, but clearly more tragedy than horror, all snacked-on cheeks to the contrary.

One thing is for sure, though: the "real" Hannibal would despise being sympathized with. He'd find it crass, sentimental, ludicrously ordinary, and maybe that in itself will be Harris' ultimate revenge on the character who ate his career. Given how often Dr. Lecter's dignity has demanded he prove himself uncategorizable, to then be reduced to



Hannibal Rising: *Gaspard Ulliel as the young cannibal.*

nothing more than a well-educated bundle of "normal" serial killer traumas, no different than tragic superfreaks like Francis Dolarhyde or Jame Gumb (who he helped catch), is surely the unkindest cut of all.

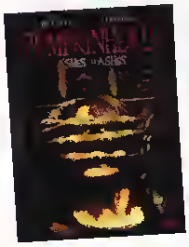
Gemma Files

JAKE WEST GETS CARVED

PUMPKINHEAD: ASHES TO ASHES

Starring Doug Bradley, Douglas Roberts and Lisa McAllister
Directed by Jake West
Written by Barbara Werner, John Werner and Jake West
Sony Pictures

FX man Stan Winston's 1988 directorial debut, *Pumpkinhead*, is a Gothic fairy tale of loss and revenge (its alternate title was actually *Vengeance: The Demon*) set against a supernatural Southern billhilly backdrop. While not a perfect film by any stretch, it's buoyed by thick atmosphere, a sombre tone, Lance Henriksen's haunted performance as a grief-stricken dad and an eye-popping title beastie.

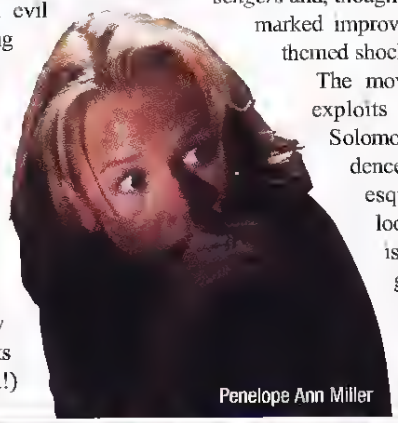


Unfortunately, Jeff Burr's DTV follow-up *Pumpkinhead 2: Blood Wings* was a thoroughly botched affair, missing almost all the elements that the first one sported in spades, and now, a dozen years later, we have Jake (*Evil Aliens*) West's made for the Sci Fi network *Pumpkinhead: Ashes to Ashes*, which makes *Blood Wings* look like freakin' *Gone With the Wind*.

Ignoring the wrong-headed plot detours of *Blood Wings* and choosing to pick up after the events of the first film, *Ashes to Ashes* stars Douglas Roberts as Bunt, the grown-up version of the original's child catalyst. Years after the hideous events of the first film, Bunt is having nightmares of being marked by Pumpkinhead. Meanwhile, an evil doctor (*Hellraiser*'s Doug Bradley) is harvesting human organs and pissing off the townsfolk, especially Molly Sue (Tess Panzer), who seeks out the peasant witch that controls the demon. Meanwhile, Henriksen's ghost (Can a ghost age? Apparently so, as here Lance looks like his own grandpa!) hangs out, adding almost nothing to the mix. And Pumpkinhead himself? The intricately designed Hellspawn of the first two films is replaced by a guy in a slipshod rubber suit.

Ashes to Ashes has virtually no tone, no tension and it sports a needlessly convoluted plot that'll make your head hurt. Bradley is okay as the naughty, spleen-stealing doc, but everyone else drifts through the picture in a daze. If you're a fan of Winston's film (which arguably should never have been sequelized in the first place), so will you.

Chris Alexander



Penelope Ann Miller

SAYS YOU, CHRIS

THE MESSENGERS

Starring Kristen Stewart, Penelope Ann Miller and John Corbett
Directed by Danny Pang and Oxide Pang Chun
Written by Mark Wheaton
Sony Pictures

Maybe I had something in my own peeper, but I genuinely disliked Danny and Oxide Pang's breakthrough 2002 HK thriller *The Eye*. Plodding, derivative and littered with endless silly spooks-in-the-background sight gags, the film nonetheless commanded sequels, Tom Cruise snatched up the rights to remake it for North America and the brothers themselves were wooed by Sam Raimi's Ghosthouse label to helm a North American foray into supernatural shenanigans. The resulting East-meets-West creeper is *The Messengers* and, though many may disagree, it's a marked improvement over their ocular-themed shockers.

The movie follows the doomed exploits of the cash-strapped Solomon clan, who take up residence in a spooky Amityville-esque manor. Seems this looming monolith of a house is positively packed with gropey ghosts, and since eldest daughter Jess (*Panic Room*'s Kristen Stewart in a believably distressed perfor-





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- Written By **BRENT HANLEY** (FRAILTY)
- Starring **GEORGE WENDT** (CHEERS, HOUSE), **MEREDITH MONROE** (DAWSON'S CREEK) and **MATT KEESLAR** (SCREAM 3)

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NORM!

FAMILY

Starring George Wendt,
Meredith Monroe and Matt Keeslar
Directed by John Landis
Written by Brent Hanley
Anchor Bay



John Landis' *Masters of Horror* season one entry, *Deer Woman*, was a low point for the series, with its padded-out plot, lame characters, juvenile dialogue and inane concept. So it's a bit of a surprise that his second effort, *Family*, is one of the series' best. Well, maybe it's not that big of a surprise, as this time, instead of co-writing the story with his son, Landis is directing from a script by Brent Hanley, who penned the highly underrated *Frailty* (one of *RM*'s top 100 Alternative Horror Films; see issue *#50*).

George Wendt – Norm from *Cheers* – stars as a suburban widower named Harold. On the outside, this waddling, sweater-clad teddy bear of a man is friendly and helpful to a fault, particularly when a new couple moves in down the street. Exceedingly WASPy Celia (Meredith Monroe) and David (Matt Keeslar) are trying to keep their marriage together after the loss of a child, and Harold is more than happy to be a puffy shoulder to cry on. Unfortunately for the yuppies, Harold is also nutzoid homicidal. He kidnaps strangers, strips the meat off their bones then adds them to the skeleton family in the upstairs of his house. Now he's got designs on Celia.

With its suburban setting, wickedly macabre sense of humour and TV star lead, *Family* is basically a *Tales From the Crypt* episode without the Cryptkeeper (go figure: Wendt starred in a *TFtC* episode back in the day). It fits Landis' horror-comedy sensibility perfectly, and the guy behind *An American Werewolf in London* and *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, brings a nice light touch to the series with a confident balance of gore and laughs. If Landis does any more *MoH* work, let's hope he once again passes on father-son day at the *Masters of Horror* factory.

Dave Alexander

mance) is so damned squishy, they have plenty of reasons to get grabby. Enter a half-cut drifter (*Sex and the City*'s John Corbett) who, after plinking some possessed crows with his rifle, gets the gig of tending the surrounding land. Then the real terror begins, more or less.

The Messengers is just as derivative as *The Eye*, but it's thick with rural Gothic atmosphere and littered with some quality jump scares. Many critics have slammed the film for the detached acting, but it adds a certain otherworldliness to the proceedings – much like Billy Drago's dissonant performance in Takashi Miike's *Masters of Horror* episode *Imprint* (undoubtedly the result of an Anglo actor being instructed by an arch Asian sensibility). Here, we have an absolutely insane turn by Corbett that makes Drago look positively subdued. And while *The Messengers* offers nothing new to the haunted house genre in terms of plot or character, the Pangs have refined their brand of elegant eerieness tenfold since *The Eye*, making this one a bump-in-the-night potboiler that, in its own creaky B-movie way, works rather well indeed.

Chris Alexander

LE WEEKEND IN LE COUNTRY

SHEITAN

Starring Vincent Cassel, Olivier Barthelemy
and Roxanne Mesquida
Directed by Kim Chapiron
Written by Christian and Kim Chapiron
Tartan Video



The urban vs. rural theme is a well-established horror convention. From *Deliverance* to *Wrong Turn*, urban dwellers are constantly being defiled, abused, raped and mutilated on film by their rural brethren. *Sheitan*, an insane first feature from director/writer Kim Chapiron, a member of the French art collective Kourtrajme, offers a Gallic twist on the genre.

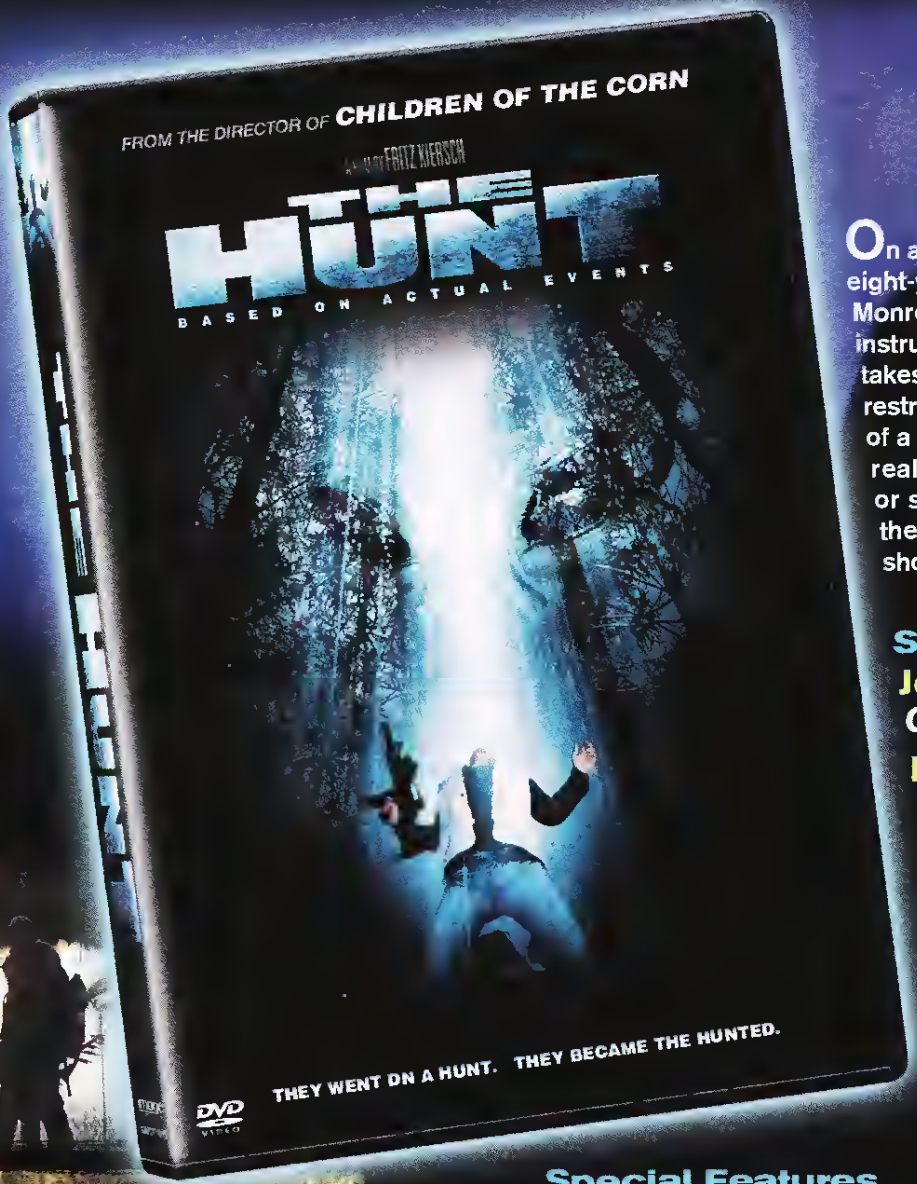
Irreversible's Vincent Cassel produced the film and stars as Joseph, a dentally challenged caretaker at a country estate whose maniacal grin hides a multitude of demonic sins. His charges this particular weekend include Bart (Olivier Barthelemy) and several other multicultural club kids from Paris who find the countryside terribly amusing. Their escort is the sexy Eve (Roxanne Mesquida), a seductress whose sophistication hooks the boys into a weekend adventure they will never forget. The film slowly and surely ratchets up the tension; we know something bad is going to happen but we're not sure what until close to the end.





A FRIGHTENING TALE OF SURVIVAL BASED ON ACTUAL EVENTS

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **CHILDREN OF THE CORN**



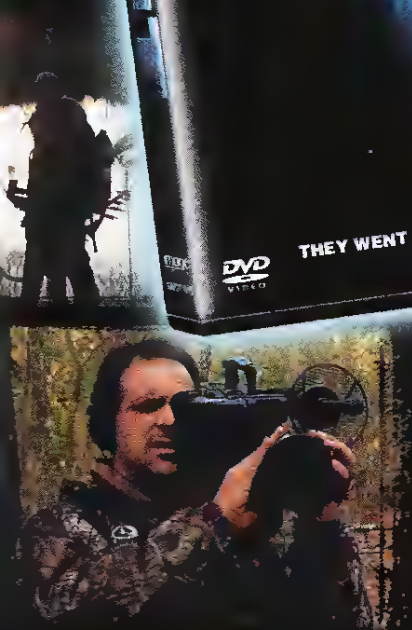
On a chilly fall morning, Jack Hamberg, his eight-year-old stepson and cameraman Atticus Monroe head into the woods to make an instructional hunting video when their outing takes a disturbing turn. While trespassing on restricted land, they stumble upon the relics of a bizarre religious monument and soon realize they're being stalked by someone or something not of this earth! You'll be on the edge of your seat from beginning to shocking end!

Starring

Joe Michael Burke – ***Guess Who, Wild Things 2***

Robert Rusler – TV's ***Babylon 5***

Cliff De Young – ***Path to War, Carnosaur 2***





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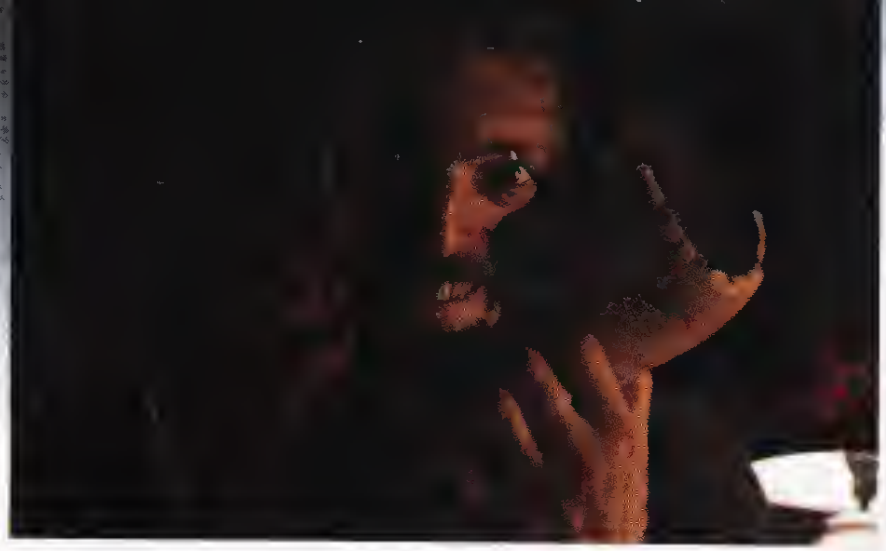
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Sheitan: *Vincent Cassel as Joseph the caretaker*

Chapiron does a great job of tweaking the brittleness of urban sophistication. As Bart, Barthelemey distinguishes himself as an asshole, the kind of guy who gropes his sleeping female friend, insults women in clubs and kicks goats when they're in his way. He's also too cool to swim in the hot spring Joseph shows them – a tense scene that underscores Bart's homophobia and the menace he and his friends have gotten themselves into. His eventual redemption mirrors Jay Hernandez's in *Hostel*, albeit more believably.

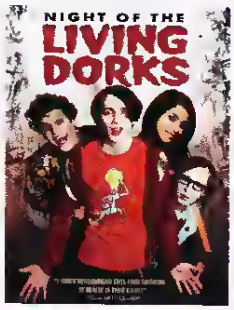
A hipper, funnier cousin to Fabrice Du Welz's *Calvaire*, *Sheitan* is a stylish, solid trip.

Sean Plummer

GERMAN ZOMBIES, AMERICAN PIE

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DORKS

Starring Tino Mewes, Manuel Cortez and Thomas Schmieder
Written and directed by Mathias Dinter
Anchor Bay



It's not easy being undead. Especially if you're a nerdy high school student desperately trying to land a date with the school hottie. But that's the predicament faced by Philip and his two friends after a fatal accident (following a botched voodoo love spell) leaves them zombified, with only 36 hours to complete a ritual that will reverse the condition.

There's no doubt that the success of 2004's *Shaun of the Dead* opened the floodgates for zom-coms. Unfortunately, far too few have achieved the same pitch-perfect balance of humour and grue, and Germany's *Night of the Living Dorks* is no exception. Despite its good intentions, *Dorks* owes more to the obnoxious lowbrow teen comedies of Hollywood than any genre entry. Brimming with jokes about bodily functions, homosexuality and drugs, it's far too much slapstick and not enough splatstick.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the trio's near bloodless escapades as zombies. With the exception of their chum Conrad, who devours the gym teacher in one of the movie's only kills, the boys do their best to suppress their flesh-eating urges. Instead they use their new undead abilities to kick some jock ass, win drinking games, indulge in prolonged underwater cunnilingus and get laid – at least until one of Philip's decomposing balls falls off.

It's packed with stereotypical characters including the goth girl, jock bullies and a hot teen slut, and the jokes are brisk but brainless. The few laugh-out-loud moments make it best seen with a crowd.

Anchor Bay's DVD is loaded with German and English-language versions of the film, interviews, behind-the-scenes footage, deleted and extended scenes, trailers and even an alternate ending. If only this could satiate the yearning for more brains, blood and re-watchability.

Monica S. Kuebler



WILL NOT FLOAT YOUR BOAT

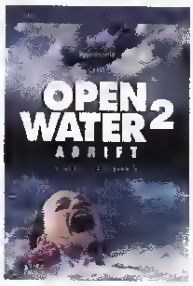
OPEN WATER 2 ADRIFT

Starring Eric Dane, Ali Hillis and Susan May Pratt
Directed by Hans Horn
Written by Adam Kreutner and Colin McMahon
Maple Pictures

The creative team behind this in-name-only sequel to the micro-budget hit *Open Water* adopted an interesting and questionable strategy: they tossed out everything that made the original so original and substituted a pastiche of horror, suspense and teen sex-comedy clichés from the bargain bin of their local DVD store.

Open Water dropped viewers in the middle of the ocean with a pair of stranded vacationers and let a digital camera and a posse of live sharks do the rest – you couldn't look away from the bleak scenario because there was nowhere *to* look. *Adrift* features three buff young couples, whose combined body fat wouldn't feed a baby hammerhead, going on a pleasure cruise on a big yacht owned by Dan, the stereotypical super-successful asshole.

After some obligatory scenes (downing Day-Glo shooters and swapping dirty jokes to establish character and clunky back story), the twentysomethings go for a quick dip in the ocean. The only problem: Dan (Eric Dane) forgot to lower the ladder, leaving them with no way of climbing the steep, slippery sides of the boat.



This scenario could have made for a cool survivalist flick, with the bickering, water-treading couples slowly turning on each other as they run out of options, but director Hans Horn continually breaks the tension with cheesy music overdubs and slow-mo close-ups of anguished facial expressions. He also ignores the obvious lesson of the first film: keep the audience in the water with the victims. We never really feel the hopelessness of slowly dying of exposure because Hoss can't resist lifting his camera out of the water for yet another stylized aerial shot.

Oh, and Hoss – if your buff, young cast is going to try to lasso their way to freedom with a rope made from their tied-together bathing suits, at least follow through with the silliness and treat us to a little underwater T&A.

James Grainger

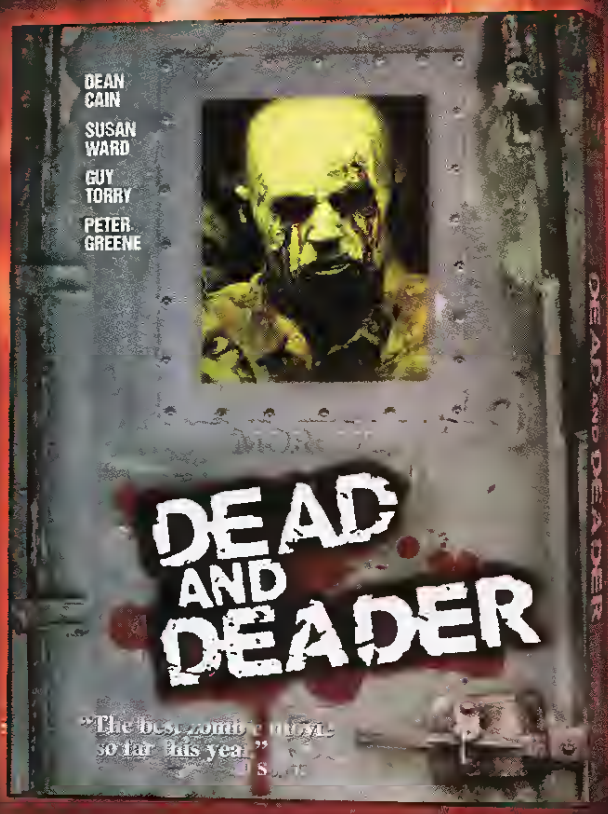
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STARRING

Dean Cain (LOIS AND CLARK)
Guy Torry (AMERICAN HISTORY X)
Susan Ward (WILD THINGS 2)
Colleen Camp (WAYNE'S WORLD)
Peter Green (PULP FICTION)

FEATURES

- Widescreen Presentation (1.78:1) enhanced for 16x9 TVs
- ***Raising the Dead:*** The Making of Dead & Deader
- Audio Commentary with Writer **Steve Kriozere** and Producer **Mark A. Altman**
- Photo Gallery
- Full Motion Menus
- DVD-Rom Script



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Dean Cain (***LOIS AND CLARK***) stars as Lt. Bobby Quinn, a Special Forces commando killed during a recon mission deep in the Cambodian jungle. But when Quinn interrupts his own stateside autopsy, he discovers that the rest of his dead squad has been resurrected with a ravenous appetite for human flesh. Now with the help of a wisecracking cook (**Guy Torry** of **AMERICAN HISTORY X**) and a sexy film geek (**Susan Ward** of **WILD THINGS 2**), the part-zombie Quinn must stop the plague before it can infect the entire nation. Who holds the shocking secret behind this blood-crazed carnage? And what happens when Quinn stops gnawing on raw steak and starts chomping on the hot chick?

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OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS SLAUGHTERED

GAG ME WITH A MACHETE



CAMP SLAUGHTER

Lightning Entertainment

Welcome to Camp Hiawatha. If canoeing, archery and swimming lessons don't interest you, then how about strangulation, vivisection and disembowelment? When a group of kids on a road trip get lost, they find themselves trapped at the camp, which is stuck in the year 1981 – when everything was *rad*, *gnarly* and *totally awesome*. What isn't totally awesome, is that for the last 24 years the campers have been repeating the same day over and over again – when they were murdered by a machete-wielding maniac (think *Groundhog Day* meets *Friday the 13th*). Though *Camp Slaughter* (a.k.a. *Camp Daze*) has a very high body count, it suffers from horrible video and audio and also proves to be a bit of a homoerotic romp that must have Jason spinning in his grave.

Body Count: 48

Best Death: Bathroom booby trap neck puncture

RETHINK THAT PANTY RAID



SLAUGHTERHOUSE PHI: DEATH SISTERS

Razor Digital Entertainment

The Tri Phi's are the sexiest sorority on campus and every babe wants to join. Not only do they spend most of their time strutting around in skimpy lingerie, they also perform a sexy satanic ritual as part of their initiation rites. But when a girl dies after an initiation prank goes wrong, the sisters decide to hide the corpse and pretend that nothing happened. At the following year's initiation, the girl's corpse comes back for revenge. Though the makeup effects are good, the murder weapon prop is hopelessly cheesy. It's the cast that saves this one, especially exploitation character actor Jed Rowen in a brief but outstanding performance as a creepy photographer who meets a grisly end. If you get the chance, try the Phi – you won't be disappointed.

Body Count: 11

Best Death: Sickle slash in the stomach

WATCH YOUR (TINY) BACK!



SLAUGHTER PARTY

Troma Team Video

Remember *Sleepaway Camp*? Remember the murderous thirteen-year-old with the horrible secret? Well, Angela (Felissa Rose) is all grown-up now and stars in Troma's latest slasher flick, *Slaughter Party*. Rose plays Tara, who leads a group of bikini-clad babes who run afoul of a manic midget and have to fight for their lives. We've come to expect many things from Troma – loads of T&A, tasteless gags, buckets of blood and transparent plots, but here Lloyd Kaufman and crew have brilliantly raised the bar of vulgarity with a midget sodomy scene. And with bikinis and blood flying everywhere and cameos from Ron Jeremy, Seymore Butts and the always sexy Brinke Stevens, *Slaughter Party* is one of those movies that's so bad it's good. All hail Uncle Lloyd!

Body Count: 17

Best Death: Midget molestation and strangulation

Last Chance Lance

A WEAK PULSE

HEARTSTOPPER

Starring Robert Englund, Meredith Henderson and Nathaniel Stephenson
Directed by Bob Keen
Written by Vlady Pildysh
Anchor Bay

Within the first few seconds of this movie, a man has his heart ripped out of his chest and a sexy teenager is about to hurl herself off a highway overpass to what promises to be a very messy death.



Unfortunately, it's all downhill from there

Heartstopper is the story of Chambers, a possessed serial killer who lives through the lamest looking electrocution ever committed to celluloid. Waking up in a deserted hospital at night during a thunderstorm he stalks a young female patient, intending to transfer his evil into her body. Sound familiar?

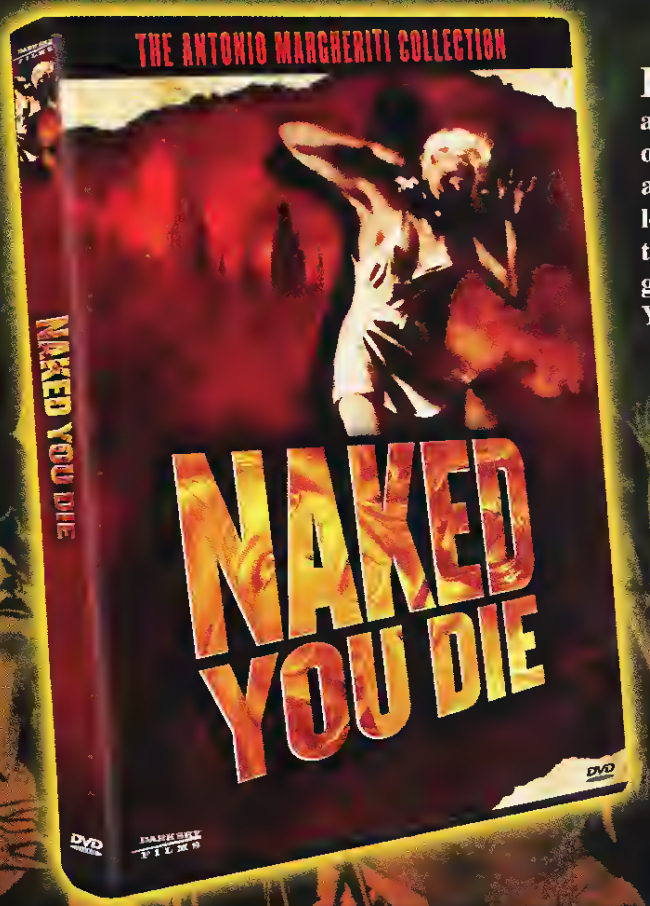
This is one of those movies that you watch and feel like The Amazing Kreskin because you can predict just about everything that's going to happen – because you've seen it all before. Not even Robert Englund, co-starring in an uncharacteristic good-guy role as the town sheriff, can breathe life into this sick puppy, as he meets his end far too soon to be of any consequence.

The main problem, though, is that the bad guy, played by stuntman James Binkley, just isn't bad enough. He spends most of the movie sauntering through the hospital corridors, casting the odd glare and spouting biblical verses in a monotone voice that's more sleep-inducing than scary. Yes, some hearts are yanked out, and there is a high body count, but there's never any real danger for the heroes, who manage to slowly limp away from him at every turn. The best thing about the DVD is a great fifteen-minute interview with Englund, who waxes poetically about his rediscovered love of the horror genre.

If you've seen *Halloween 2* and *Shocker*, then you have already seen much better versions of this movie. But, if you're a glutton for punishment, run out and rent this sucker, stat!

Last Chance Lance

THERE'S NOBODY THERE TO SAVE YOU FROM THIS NIGHTMARE!



From the minds of Italian horror kings Mario Bava and Antonio Margheriti comes this macahre tale of murder at an all girls school. The corpses are piling up at St. Hilda's School for girls, leaving top cop Michael Rennie with more than the usual suspects. By the time you guess the identity of the killer... You'll he dead!

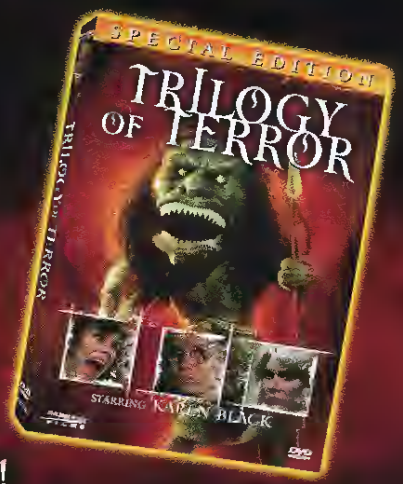
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Sharing a place alongside the futuristic space robots, fluffy bunnies and short-skirted schoolgirls of Japanese afternoon television is one of the most violent anime series ever created: *TOKKO*.

TOKYO BLOODBATH

by Last Chance Lance

It's a pleasant, sunny day in the Tokyo suburb of Machida; children are playing; families are sitting down for dinner. The serene setting is shattered as a giant sinkhole suddenly opens and a vicious, bloodsoaked creature crawls out to wreak havoc. When the dust settles, 382 people have been slaughtered – their blood and body parts smeared across the floors, walls and ceilings of what used to be their happy homes. From the start, *Tokko*, the newest release from Anchor Bay's growing line of Japanese anime titles, seeks to shock the viewer with unforgiving brutality and doesn't let up until the closing credits.



Set five years after the massacre, *Tokko* tells the story of Shindou Ranmaru, a police cadet who survived the carnage (along with his sister Saya) and is graduating from the police academy, which he joined in an effort to solve the mysterious murders which claimed the lives of their parents. He seems like a normal, everyday cop, but his nights are filled with visions of horrific monsters and a beautiful half-naked girl covered in strange tattoos who fights them off with a blood-caked sword.

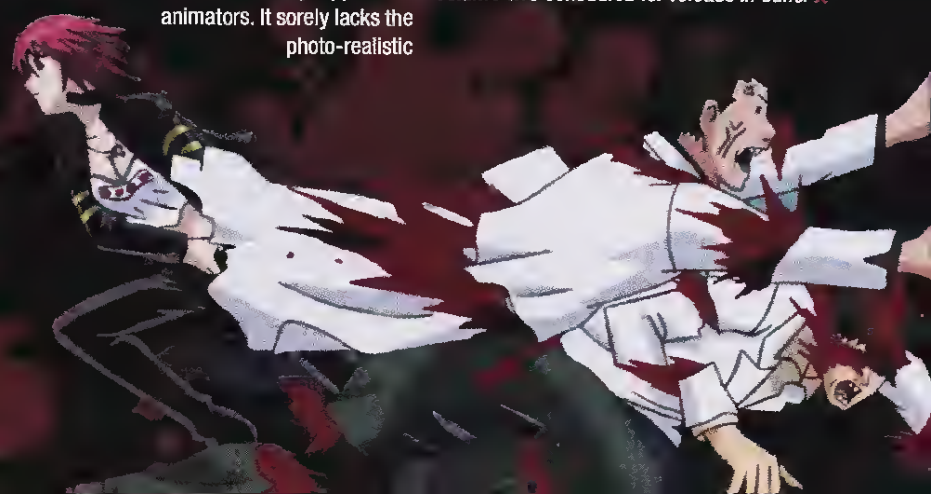
While investigating a series of brutal attacks by what appear to be demons, Ranmaru uncovers the Tokko, a secret division of elite police officers with special powers who fight the monster menace with swords and daggers. Ranmaru and his fellow officers are kept very busy as more of the giant pits appear across the city, spewing phantoms who use maggot-like creatures to infest their victims, turning them into zombies. During one of these showdowns he's rescued by the girl from his dreams, also a member of the Tokko squad. They join forces to fight the phantoms.

Based on the well-received 2004 manga series by Fujisawa Toru (*Great Teacher Onizuka*), *Tokko* was adapted for television and presented in thirteen episodes to Japanese audiences in the spring of 2006. As its popularity grew, it also spawned a radio show and a soundtrack release.

Director Abe Masashi, a veteran of popular anime titles like *Tenchi Moyu* and *Blue Gender* competently tackles this horror epic and gives it a blunt, sexually charged, humorous edge that the original manga lacked. Unfortunately, the animation itself is nothing special, looking more like it was rushed to screen by apprentice animators. It sorely lacks the photo-realistic backgrounds and deep textures of titles such as *Requiem From the Darkness* or *Le Portrait de Petit Cossette*.

Even with the cheesy jokes and lacklustre animation, the series is not for the timid. While most horror anime titles try to present moralistic or karmic themes, *Tokko* is nothing more than an unrelenting bloodbath. In the episode "Phantom," an innocent scientist is turned into a huge, twisted monstrosity bristling with bulbous eyes and razor-sharp teeth, only to end up strewn on the sidewalk in several hundred pieces a short time later. Similarly, there are no tears shed for the doctors turned into zombies in "Bond." Rather, they're unceremonious shredded by Tokko blades. Instead of a morality tale, viewers are presented with a dark, ultra-violent anime gurgling with gallons and gallons of blood, numerous decapitations, exploding eyeballs and a flurry of severed limbs. But hey – who's complaining?

Volume One of Tokko *is now available, with volume two scheduled for release in June.*



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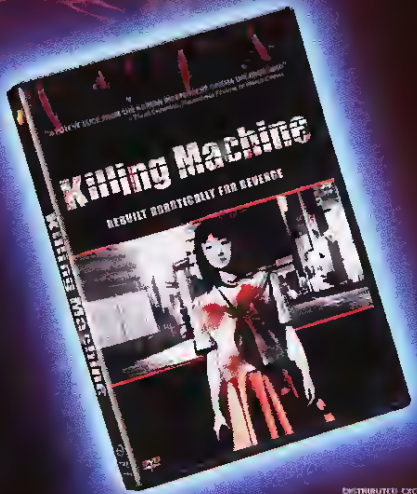


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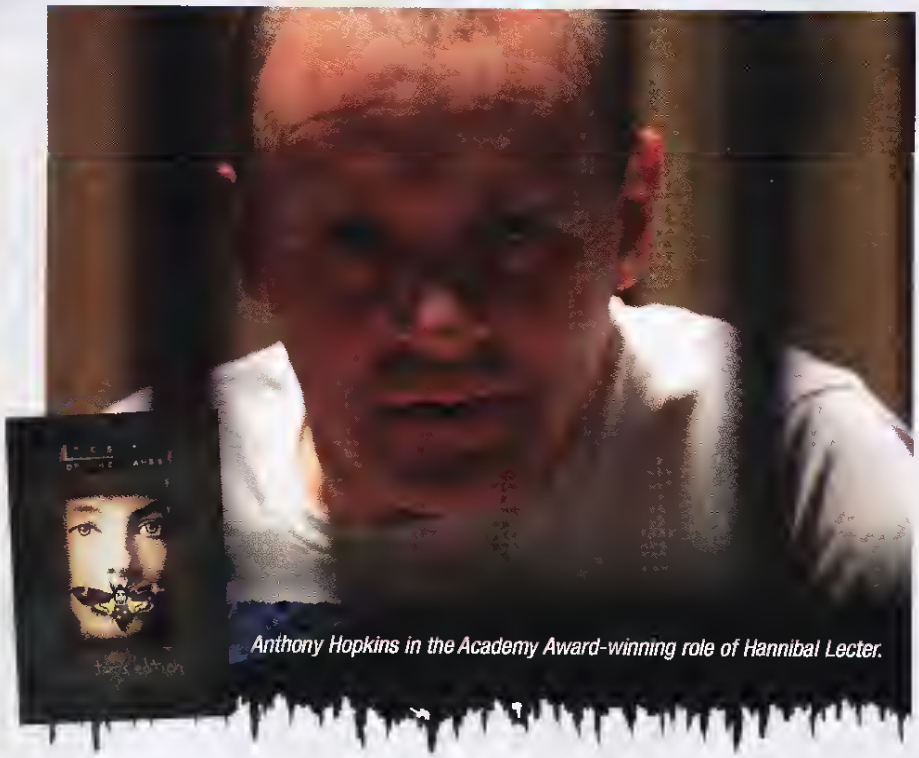
"A lurid, scrappy, savagely experimental piece... serves up a plot that crosses Ms. 45 and Robocop and bathes it in blinding primary colors. Nam's film is closer in spirit to George Kuchar or Jon Moritsugu than recently anointed cult figure Takashi Miike..."
- VILLAGE VOICE



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REISSUES



Anthony Hopkins in the Academy Award-winning role of Hannibal Lecter.

CANNIBAL REDUX

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991)

Starring Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins and Scott Glenn
Directed by Jonathan Demme
Written by Thomas Harris and Ted Tally
MGM

When *The Silence of the Lambs* hit theatres in the winter of 1991 it was not supposed to be a hit. The studio considered it an art house film due to its female protagonist, cannibalistic leading man and relatively unknown director, Jonathan Demme. Even though Jody Foster had won an Oscar two years before for her role in *The Accused*, North American audiences had seen very little of Welsh actor Anthony Hopkins.

But somehow everything came together perfectly and the story of FBI agent Clarice Starling (Foster) and her relentless attempt to track down a brutal serial killer by seeking the advice of a jailed psychopath has become a watershed in horror movie history. Having won five Oscars, including best picture, screenplay and both male and female actor awards, *SotL* spawned a sequel, two prequels and has made Hopkins' Dr. Hannibal Lecter one of the most terrifying contemporary movie monsters.

Coinciding with the release of *Hannibal Rising* (see p.37 for review), MGM has issued this collector's edition double-disc DVD packed with never-before-seen interviews, outtakes and documentaries. The new features delve into the mysterious life of reclusive author Thomas Harris, exposing the excruciatingly painful detail that he heaped into the story and how Ted Tally successfully translated it for the screen.



Fans will delight in stories detailing how actor Gene Hackman was originally going to direct and star in the movie as Lecter, Demme's search for an actress (and Foster's passionate plea to play Clarice), the development of Lecter's Plexiglas cell, and the fascinating cameos by Roger Corman, George Romero and singer Chris Isaak, among others. Other features cover how the musical score was created, plus the wrath the movie incurred from gay activists offended by the negative gay stereotype that the movie appeared to portray.

The whole package is rounded out with 22 deleted scenes, a handful of brief though hilarious outtakes, a phone message from Dr. Lecter and even printed dinner invitations with recipes for such delicacies as Deviled Lamb's Tongue and Fava Bean Risotto. Just the kind of movie you want to watch the next time you have a friend for dinner.

Last Chance Lance

WHEN CHILD STARS ATTACK

DEVIL TIMES FIVE (1974)

Starring Sorrell Booke, Leif Garrett and Shelley Morrison
Directed by Sean MacGregor
Written by John Durren and Dylan Jones
Code Red

Think *Devil Times Five* is a freakin' silly title? Hey, it could be worse – it could be called *The Horrible House on the Hill* or *People Toys*, it was actually released under both those unfortunate monikers at various junctures. This sporadically entertaining but largely lifeless film from the early '70s evil child subgenre is one of those flicks you'll find yourself sitting through mainly as a before-they-were-famous (or almost famous) curiosity.

The main attraction here for incurable nostalgics is *Surreal Life* candidate Leif Garrett, several years before full-blown teen idoldom hit and many more years before heroin addiction and jail. Sitcom TV fans will thrill to the presence of a pre-*Dukes of Hazzard* Sorrell (Boss Hogg) Booke, tough guy character actor Gene Evans as the cantankerous, bullying tycoon, and a very pre-*Will and Grace* Shelley Morrison.

When a van transporting five pint-sized psychotics to the junior cracker factory crashes in the wilderness, the little monsters make tracks across the snowy countryside and take shelter in the opulent winter home of a wealthy businessman, whose bickering guests are subsequently offed one at a time by the youngsters.

Some shocking violence breaks up the tedium sporadically, as do a few boobies and one wayward sitcom, but *Dx5*'s general clumsiness undermines it at virtually every turn.

However, the audio commentary and interview segments on Code Red's new reissue do more than shed light on a troubled production – they'll leave you marvelling that



Devil Times Five: *A few murders break up the tedium of this 1970s killer kid film*

the film ever got finished. Director Sean MacGregor, described by various cast and crew as "a great talker and a great drinker" who never finished anything he started," wound up with only 38 minutes of footage and was subsequently yanked from the production, after which the producers wrote and directed additional scenes that were eventually cobbled together to pad out the running time.

Little more than a horror footnote, *Dx5* is likely most interesting to middle-aged readers with stacks of old *Tiger Beat* magazines stashed away in the attic.

John W. Bowen

CHOP-SOCKY VOODOO

BLACK MAGIC (1975)

Starring Lung Ti, Tanny Tien Ni and Feng Ku
Directed by Meng Hua Ho
Written by Kuang Ni
Image Entertainment



For those of us used to watching scratchy prints of kung fu classics in decaying grindhouses, there's something a little perverse about watching a pristine-looking Shaw Brothers film. So kudos to Celestial Pictures for restoring *Black Magic* – now vibrant and uncut.

In this tale of envy and desire, Feng Ku plays Shan Jianmai, an evil practitioner of the black arts who, for a price, will kill your enemy or make that special someone fall in love with you. After falling prey to a temporary love spell herself, rich widower Lo Yin employs the necromancer to cast a spell on Hsu Lo (Lung Ti), a handsome young engineer employed by her late husband's firm who has rejected her advances. This involves procuring samples of his hair and blood, as well as her breast milk (a neat little plot device to justify exposed bosoms). When the plan works, Lo's devastated bride, Wang Chu-ying (Lily Li), implores her bewitched hubby to return, so a nervous Lo Yin has a death spell put on the grieving bride. Fortunately, Chu-ying's family knows a bex and they implore Master Furong, a good black magician, to save Chu-ying's life. Lo Yin attempts to get away with Hsu Lo, but the necromancer has plans of his own, leading to a climactic battle between good and evil, accomplished with some very dodgy special effects.

It's more than little melodramatic but a lot of fun, with director Meng Hua Ho caming his horror props with defiled corpses, squirming subcutaneous worms and bloody, cursed coconuts. The film's vibrant colour scheme (bright reds and blues predominate) and score ('70s waa-waa guitar for casual scenes, spooky electronic tonalities for scary ones) date it, but also make *Black Magic* one of the Shaws' most stylish efforts. Of course, to get the full grindhouse effect, you'll have to spill Coke and popcorn over your own floor, but it's worth it.

Sean Plummer

DEAD WOOD

THE FOREST (1982)

Starring Dean Russell, Gary Kent and John Batis
Directed by Donald M. Jones
Written by Evan Jones
Code Red

After helming several minor sexploitation hits in the 1970s, director Donald M. Jones must have bumped his head while jumping on the *Friday the 13th* bandwagon, and the result was *The Forest*, a terminally flaccid horror film that concentrates on scenes of long woodland walks rather than sex or violence.

It begins with stressed-out city dwellers Charlie (John Batis) and Steve (Dean Russell) heading out for a week of camping and relaxation with their wives (Tomi Barrett and Ann Wilkinson). The ladies arrive first, but before they can pitch the tent, they're approached by the ghosts of two precocious kids and their ill-tempered mother, who warn them that cannibalistic family patriarch John (Gary Kent) is at large, and he's hungry. On arriving, the oblivious husbands happen upon the old man's cave hideout – curiously decorated with just a rocking chair and a candelabrum – and learn the long story of how he went insane over a friendly meal of BBQed spouse. Eventually realizing that John is in fact a cold-blooded killer, Charlie and Steve must rely on the ghosts' help to escape with their lives.



Utterly incompetent, *The Forest* spends a good hour trying to wring some drama or suspense out of its ultra-thin premise, but to no avail. Forget about gore or thrills as the film's charmless leads climb over rocks, look around and engage in pointless conversation. Even worse: the film's goofy killer, an unshaven schmuck in a mesh ball cap and stained T-shirt.

Despite a fairly bloody pre-credits kill sequence – no doubt tacked on by a desperate distributor – and a hilarious theme song by aging Canadian doo-wop artist David Somerville, *The Forest* is about as much fun as poison ivy, and far more irritating.

Paul Corupe





Vampires, zombies, tranny sex demons of the subconscious... get your fill of Jess Franco with these three erratic reissues.

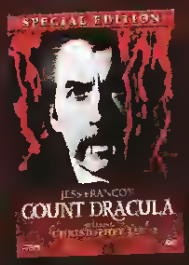
EURO-SLEAZE MERCHANT

Reviews by Chris Alexander and Mark R. Hasan

COUNT DRACULA (1970)

Dark Sky

When Jess Franco's on, he's a king of the moody Gothic Eurohorror exploitation picture (see *The Sadistic Baron Von Klaus*). When he's off, he makes Uwe Boll look like Erich von Stroheim. Franco's 1970, semi-faithful adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* careens maddeningly between the two extremes, sometimes thrilling, occasionally insipid and often dull, but always the work of a guy who adores making movies.



Franco and co-producer Harry Alan Towers managed to lure Christopher Lee to this Spanish/Italian/German co-production with the promise of fidelity to the source novel, and often the film does capture the essence of Stoker's story quite well. Herbert Lom (*Mark of the Devil*) also turns up, as a stiff, glowering Van Helsing, top-billed Klaus Kinski collects a paycheque as the mute, bug-eating Renfield, Soledad Miranda (*Vampyros Lesbos*) pounds pulses as Lucy and Bruno Nicolai's delirious score holds it all together.

On the downside, the director's almost DOD reliance on his zoom lens is in full effect here, often taking a glitzy but pointless dive into some poor actor's puss. In addition, the pace is languid and, worst of all, the obviously low-budget film shows its seams far too often. When Harker throws Styrofoam boulders that bounce casually off a horse's head, it's laugh-out-loud funny.

Dark Sky offers a pristine widescreen print and crisp two-channel mono sound plus a great interview with the mad Spaniard himself. While nowhere near perfect, this is still a worthwhile interpretation of the Dracula mythos. **CA**

MACUMBA SEXUAL (1983)

Severin

The fact that Jess Franco's work often fails to behave like "movies" and occasionally ends up unwatchable is really a moot point. In the case of *Macumba Sexual*, yet another variation on his voyeuristic sex delirium that began with 1971's *Vampyros Lesbos*, Franco's fervent need to invade female space actually works fairly well as both erotica and visual poetry.



Macumba Sexual finds Franco again working with the transsexual porn diva Ajita Wilson, a seven-foot-tall ebony Amazon. Wilson plays an evil spirit named Princess Dbongo, who haunts the dreams of Alice – perpetually nude Lina Romay (under her nom de porn Candy Coster), causing her to orgasm in her sleep ad infinitum. And while Alice wants to exorcise the delicious demon, she also wants to succumb to its monstrous charms.

Visually, *Macumba Sexual* is Franco at his most elegant, with endless soft focus scenes of rolling waves, sandy beaches and Spanish sunsets. There are also plenty of perversions and kinks on display, including a cackling Wilson walking two leashed naked men like dogs. Fans of Franco's notorious *Female Vampire* will appreciate how Romay is essentially playing a reversal of her Countess Irina character, and the director's followers will probably dig his cameo as a local letch. Severin's sumptuous print is in 2.35:1 widescreen, with muted, sun-kissed colours and a dreamy, lounge pop score. **CA**

MANSION OF THE LIVING DEAD (1985)

Severin

There are only so many times a character can rationalize a hotel's desolation and eerie stillness by exclaiming, "they must all be at the beach," before you realize writer/director/composer/cinematographer Jess Franco has no intention of playing things straight. Owing a lot more to Amando de Ossorio's *Tombs of the Blind Dead* than George Romero's zombie efforts, Franco spiced up *Mansion of the Living Dead* by adding a ridiculous amount B-movie sex and violence, yet his overly ambitious mythology is clobbered by a miniscule budget.



The plot has four strippers on an el cheapo vacation at a Spanish resort, where they insist on staying despite a creepy gardener, a manager who keeps his wife dog-collared in their bedroom and a colleague who wanders off and gets killed in an abandoned monastery.

Stripped of its tepid gore, bad zombie makeup, interminable montages of backlit hallways and exploratory walks by the windy coast, *Mansion* showcases long sessions of lesbian sex and un-priestly behaviour by rape-fixated Templars. Whole sequences are repeated to fill out the running time, while technical gaffs ruin the mood.

Severin's DVD includes a pristine transfer, a lengthy interview with Franco and comments from Lina Romay, intercut with Franco talking about his various pseudonyms. **MRH**



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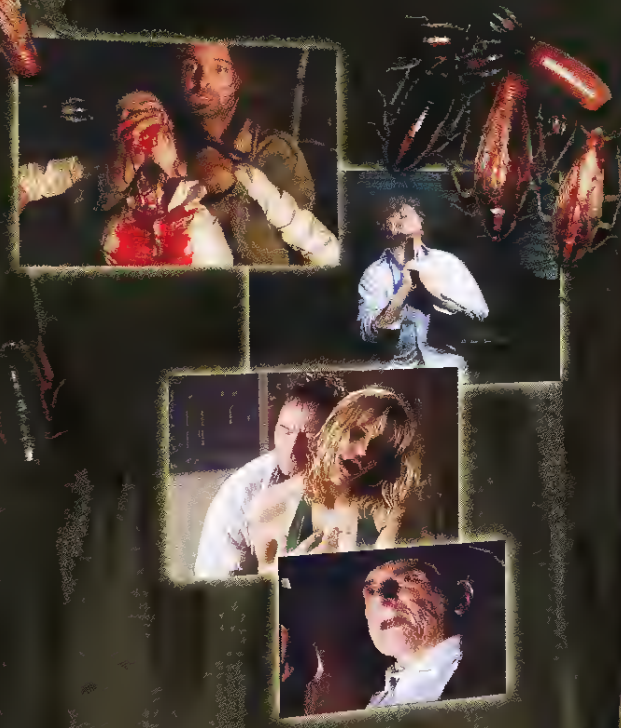
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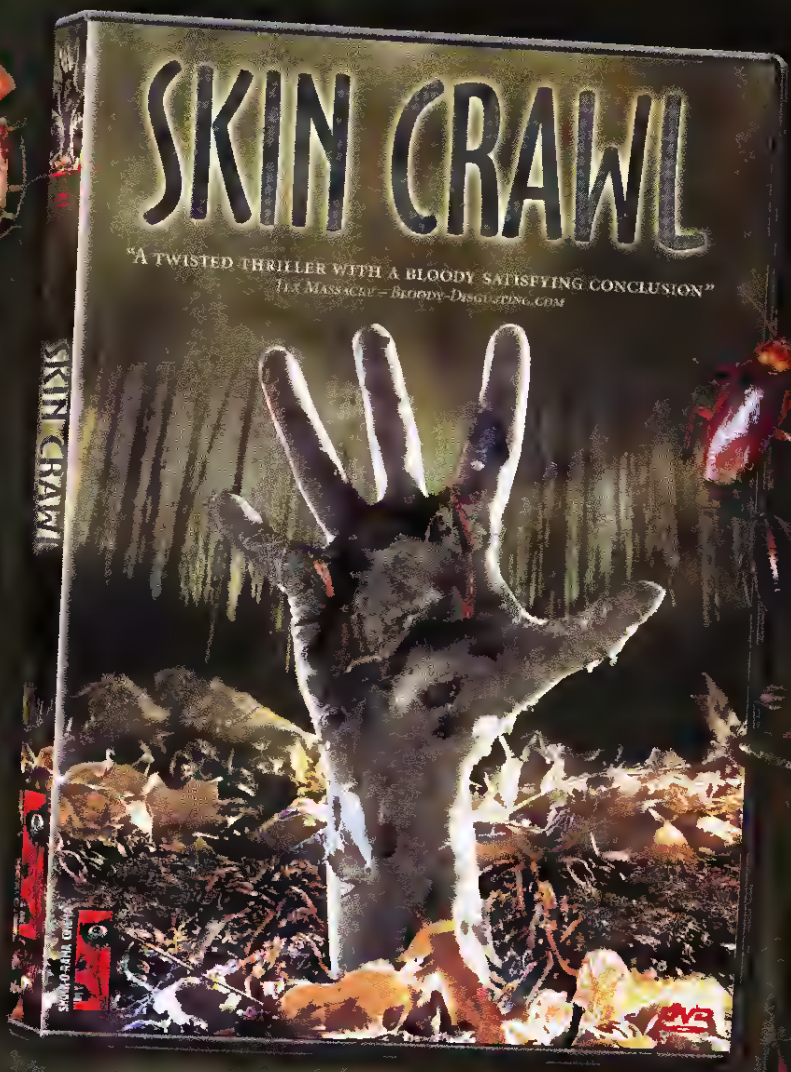
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STARTLING! HORROR TRAILER COMPILATIONS ARE MAKING A COMEBACK ON DVD. SHOCKING!

SLUMMING ATTRACTIONS

BY PAUL CORUPE

Once relegated to the back of grubby newsprint VHS mail-order catalogues, trailer compilations were the only way for fans to see vintage advertisements from their favourite horror films. Removing the ads from their original context, these tapes presented trailers not as promotional tools, but as snippets of pop culture ephemera – mini-films that were often more enjoyable than the movies they shamelessly hyped. Trailers may be much more accessible these days, offered as bonus features on most DVDs and plastered all over the 'net, but the time-tested compilation refuses to die. DVD trailer compilations from Cheezy Flicks Entertainment, TheMonsterClub.com and Synapse are the new refuge for modern viewers who want to indulge in some of the genre's most under-appreciated efforts.



As most trailers are considered public domain, any tiny DVD studio can slap together a compilation without much cost or care, as appears to be the case with the vaguely derisively titled *Cheezy Horror Vol. 1* and *2*, from Cheezy Flicks Entertainment. Despite the inclusion of interesting, relatively unseen trailers for *The Velvet Vampire*, *Black Zoo* and *The Sinful Dwarf*, far too many obvious ads appear on these short, 60-minute DVDs, including widely seen spots for *Friday the 13th*, *The Exorcist* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. *Vol. 2* focuses more on Hammer, Amicus and the films of Roger Corman's Poe series, making *Vol. 1* the more rounded of the pair, even though several of its trailers inexplicably pull double duty on both volumes. Worse, both DVDs feature blemished transfers – almost all of these trailers are plagued by scratchy audio and distracting pixelization.

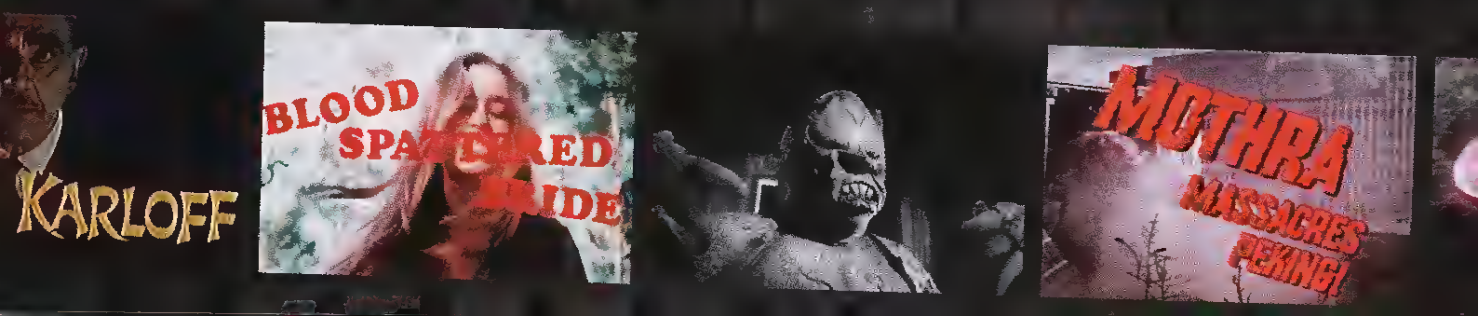
You can see how poorly the Cheezy Horror comps stack up when compared to the spit-polished transfers on *Festival of Fright*. Compiled by TheMonsterClub.com, a site devoted to old-time radio horror programs, the 75-minute long comp focuses exclusively on classic chillers from the 1950s and '60s, supplementing the usual Hammer and Roger Corman trailers with wild ballyhoo from schlock king William Castle, spots for Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* and *Black Sabbath*, and a smattering of creaky creature features from the nuclear mutation-crazed 1950s. Hidden treats include Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney Jr. and John Carradine teaming up for an ad-touting *Dr. Cadman's Secret*, plus a silent piece for John Parker's weirdo film *Dementia*, a 1955 avant-garde shocker without a single line of dialogue. Recognizing the fact that trailer compilations can provide a video backdrop for parties, TheMonsterClub.com has also included a secondary audio track of "spooky" music of the generic synthesizer variety. It's a great idea, making this disc easy to recommend to fans of classic horror and monster movies.



By contrast, Synapse's two volumes of *42nd Street Forever* aren't limited to horror, cherry-picking the sleaziest trailers from every conceivable B-genre, including nudie cuties, blaxploitation, mondo and peplum (a.k.a. sword and sandal films), each packs in two hours of manic grindhouse snake oil. The first volume (released in 2005) sets the bar high with the double-bill ad for *I Dismember Mama* and *The Blood Spattered Bride*, which features a phony news reporter interviewing viewers who have supposedly gone insane with fright, interwoven with a promotional pitch for a free "Upchuck Cup" for the squeamish. A spot for the surgery footage-padded *The Undertaker and His Pals* follows, along with the Peter Cushing vehicle *Corruption* and the ultimate biker horror movie *Werewolves on Wheels*.



The second (recently released) volume continues the madness with the rare, extremely violent-looking 1950s sea creature flick *The Monster of Piedras Blancas*, along with still more unreleased titles such as *The Evil*, *The Evictors* and the forgotten Wes Craven chiller *Deadly Blessing*. Add remastered, anamorphic widescreen transfers to the relative obscurity of many of these trailers, and it's obvious that Synapse is setting the DVD standard for trailer compilations, making it the saviour of these once-disposable promotional film shorts.

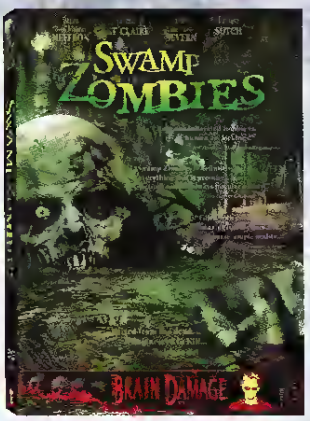


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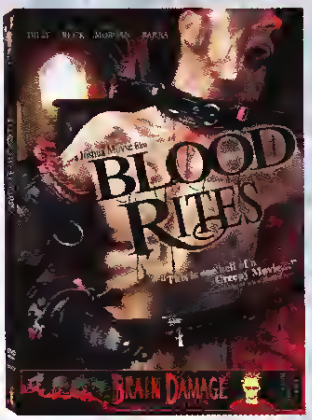
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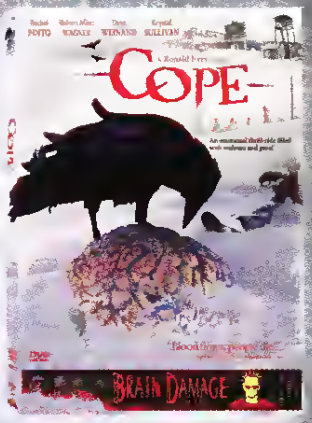
Cinderella gets a makeover in this dark tale of love, murder and the walking dead.



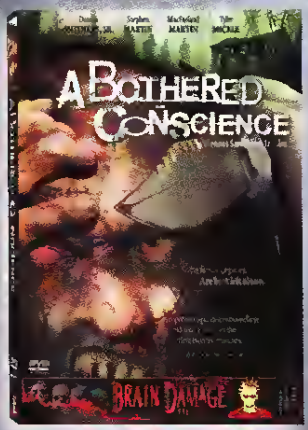
Raised from the dead... Engineered to kill... Dying to eat!



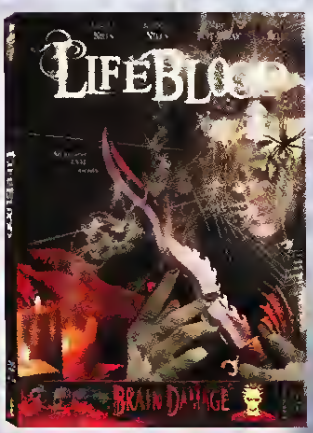
When things go wrong.... Blood Rites.



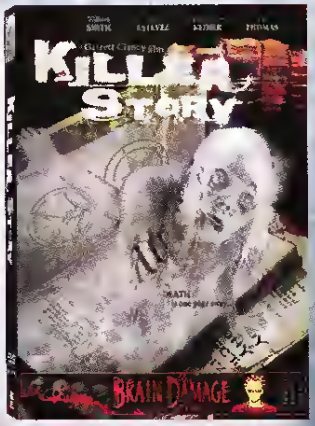
An odd phenomenon, a disturbing past and one terrifying journey!



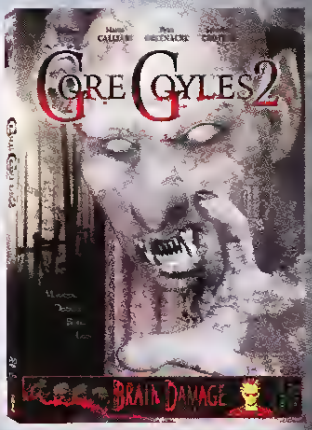
Have the rotted corpses of the McGavin prey risen from the dead?



Destinies intertwine in a tale of Gothic horror.



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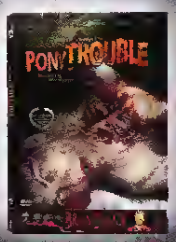
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Directed by Spencer G. Bennet and Robert Day
Written by John C. Cooper, et al
The Criterion Collection



Photo courtesy of the Criterion Collection

Boris Karloff stars as James Rankin in the AIP B-lister, ***The Haunted Strangler.***

Among the many things Criterion should be congratulated for is its willingness to restore not only well-regarded A-list films but also forgotten B-movies. So while the Criterion section of your collection can include critical faves such as Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* and Yasujiro Ozu's *Early Summer*, it can also boast drive-in fodder such as *Carnival of Souls* and *Equinox*. Welcome then to the label, the deluxe four-disc *Monsters and Madmen* set.

The four films found here are strictly B-list, but their producers, brothers Alex and Richard Gordon, knew that making cheap films did not have to mean making junk.

The Gordons came to America from England after World War II to make movies. Alex co-founded infamous exploitation house American International Pictures while Richard used his friendship with horror legend Boris Karloff to get *The Haunted Strangler* (1958) made back home under his Amalgamated Productions shingle. Amalgamated's mandate was to make cheap genre films in Britain with at least one American star to help the box office. (For all intents and purposes, the English-born Karloff was, at this point, considered a Hollywood actor.) *Strangler* was double billed with *Fiend Without a Face* (given the Criterion treatment in 2001). Amalgamated also pushed accepted limits of gore and violence in imitation of then up-and-coming Hammer Films' success with the bloody *Curse of Frankenstein*.



Here, *Strangler* is paired with *Corridors of Blood* (1958). Both are cheaply made but handsomely mounted historical productions starring Karloff. In *The Haunted Strangler*, Karloff is James Rankin, an author convinced that Edward Styles, hung twenty years earlier for a series of gruesome murders, was unjustly executed. He believes Tenant, the physician who performed Styles' autopsy, was the real killer. When Rankin's theorizing is dismissed by authorities, he digs up Styles' grave himself to find the knife he believes Tenant wielded. He finds it but becomes possessed by the killer's spirit, leading to an effective twist ending. Karloff's madness is indicated by nasty make-up and a great performance – making his fee well earned.

While it has the more salacious title, *Corridors of Blood* is more drama than horror. This time, Karloff plays Thomas Bolton, a physician in 1840 London – a time "before anesthesia" – when good surgeons were fast surgeons. Bolton is determined to disprove his colleagues' axiom that "pain and the knife are inseparable" and becomes a drug addict in his quest to find an elixir that will allow painless surgery. It also leads him to a lodging house in the poor Seven Dials neighbourhood where tenants are being murdered, their bodies sold to Bolton's colleagues for medical school experimentation. (The killer is played by a menacing, mid-30s Christopher Lee.) There are a number of gruesome moments – mostly involving Bolton's surgery – but *Corridors* is more melodramatic than macabre.

The Atomic Submarine (1959) and *First Man Into Space* (1959) seem even less horrorcentric but are genuinely fun creature features. *Submarine* is hampered by bad models and dodgy science, but the monster – a one-eyed alien piloting an underwater UFO – makes it adequate Sunday afternoon entertainment.

First Man Into Space, meanwhile, is a rather blatant rip-off of (sorry, homage to) Hammer's 1955 hit *The Quatermass Xperiment*, with an astronaut returning to Earth as a bloodsucking monstrosity. Strong scripting and nasty creature design make this better than expected.

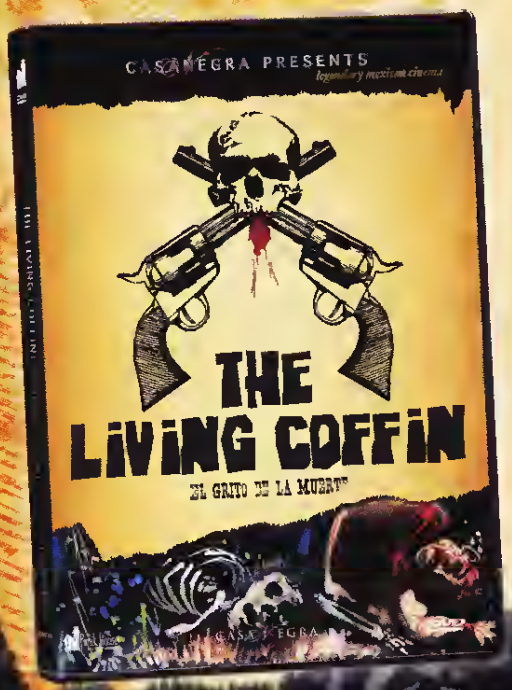
As usual, Criterion has digitally scrubbed the movies clean and stacked them with extras, including deleted scenes, still galleries and new interviews with the filmmakers and actors. Most interesting, though, are commentaries with the Gordon Brothers (Alex on *Submarine*, Richard on the rest). They discuss the importance of American stars to UK box office returns, challenging censors and exploiting current events (like the late '50s space race that inspired *First Man*) in order to make a pound. None of the *Monsters and Madmen* films are indispensable, but they're an entertaining look at how the Brits took disparaged American genres and classed them up just enough to make them their own.

Sean Plummer

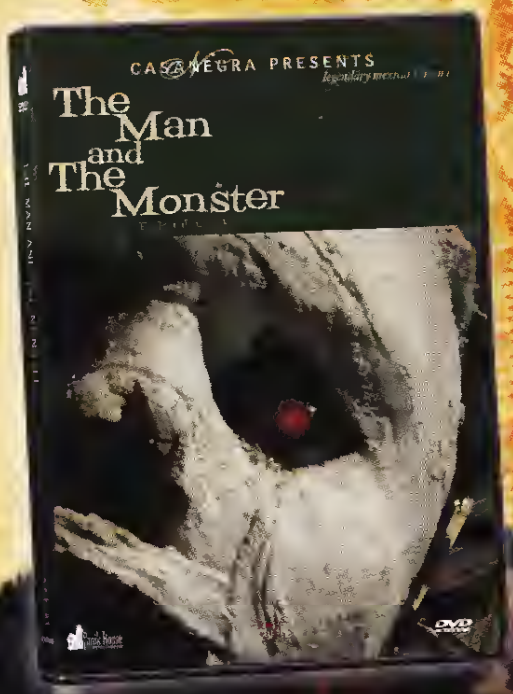
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"Boys and ghouls, once more, I give you Coralina Cataldi-Tassoni..."

The Mad Musings of a Schizoid Cinephile



by Chris Alexander

Loyal Schizoid Cinephile disciples will remember that last issue I prodded the brilliant Eurohorror starlet and badass NYC rock musician Coralina Cataldi-Tassoni for your need-to-know reading pleasure. Tassoni is the opera-singing, punk rock-loving, Italian/American Dario Argento protegé who has graced the silver screen as blood-drooling Sally in Lamberto Bava's *Demons 2*, throat-shredded seamstress Giulia in *Opera*, and now as Giselle, one of the major players in *The Third Mother*, Argento's highly anticipated follow-up to *Suspiria* and *Inferno*. So, without further babble, let's hunker down for the second installment of my interview with the 36-year-old renaissance woman. Boys and ghouls, once more, I give you Coralina Cataldi-Tassoni...

Describe your relationship with Dario Argento.

Since I was a little girl, a major obsession of mine was that of immortality. I also wondered what would be the best way for me to become immortal. Celluloid! That would be my way! And to know that with these incredible films I've been in, and now especially with the [production] of *The Third Mother*, I will forever be associated with Dario's work is beyond my wildest dreams. It goes beyond immortality. And I really feel we are connected, spiritually, as if we knew each other in a past life.

***What can you tell me about* The Third Mother?**

Not too much yet, Argento would kill me! I can tell you that this film is pure Dario – crazy and violent and stylish and totally amazing. If he pulls it off, there will really be nothing else like it. I play a woman named Giselle, the assistant curator of a museum in Rome and a friend to Asia [Argento]'s character. It is a part that Dario had written just for me, just as he had done [with the character] Giulia in *Opera* as well.



Demons 2

Your debut CD is called* Limbo Balloon. *I loved it – it's a wild mix of opera and electro and punk rock. But what's with that title? What does it mean?

Limbo was considered by the church as a place of neutrality, which has been a battle with me my whole life, this feeling of being "in the middle." For I never know if my feeling neutral might just mean I am intellectually or spiritually jaded or simply sort of dead on this earth. How scary is that? Now, the balloon – its skin, its contents, the exterior. I think of it as a microcosm of that neutrality and a representation of limbo as well. In a way, I am repeating the word two times to give more of a sense of verbal suffocation. Am I making sense?

Dear lady, my head doth spin. Now, there is actually a song on the album called "Argento." Tell me about that...

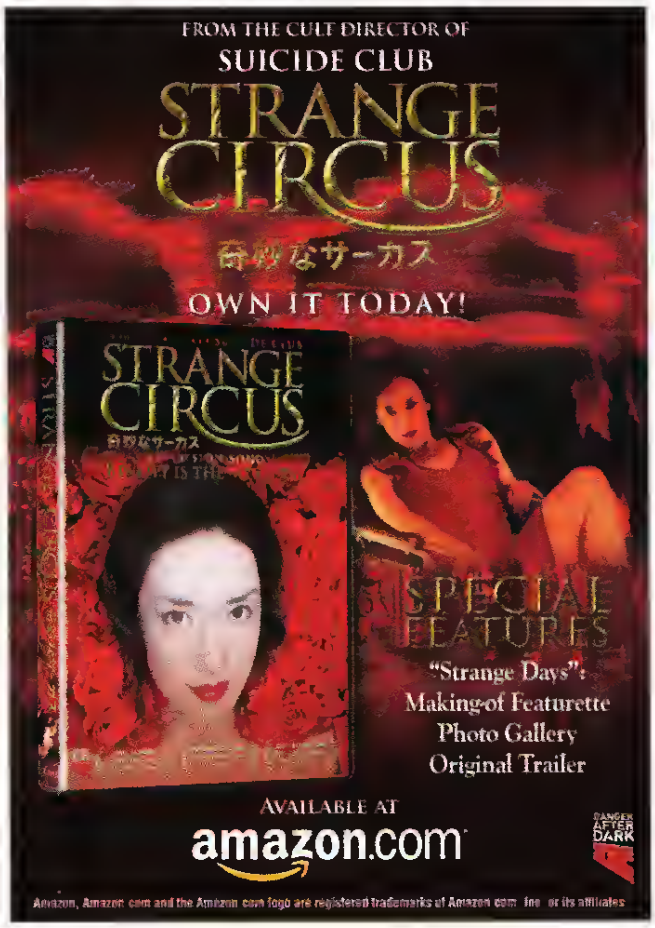
It's an ode to Dario. When I mentioned my obsession with immortality, becoming part of Dario's world, to me, goes even farther beyond that. When I have the true honour to be killed in Dario's visions, it goes beyond life and death. Like in *Opera*, when his black-gloved hands [*note: the killer's hands in an Argento pic are always his*] cut open my throat, he's not really killing me. Rather, in that moment, the moment I die... he just gave me life. I come to life for eternity. My character breathes and is given this celluloid immortality. *This* is the birth of true artistic existence and this love is what my song is about.

Is that Goblin's theme from* Deep Red *I hear playing in the background?

Yes! It's a custom of mine to put on the *Deep Red* soundtrack when I do interviews, and get *this* – Claudio Simonetti just [sent me an instant message]! He's in Rome and is apparently up late writing *The Third Mother* score. How wild! His timing is totally perfect! Sometimes it just cannot get any better than this.

Amen to that, baby, amen. Alexander out.


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IN THIS ISSUE!

CHLOE
Hans Rickheit *Chrome Fetus Comics*

DEADWORLD: REQUIEM FOR THE WORLD TPB
Gary Reed, Vince Locke and Dalibor Talajic
Desperado/Image

ELK'S RUN
Joshua Fialkov and Noel Tuazon
Villard/Random House

FALL OF CTHULHU #0
Michael Alan Nelson and Jean Dzialowski *BOOM!*

ROADKILL ZOO #1 (OF 6)
Nicole Jones, Buddy Setiawan and Derek Fridolfs
Novaris

SASQUATCH
Josh Howard and various artists *Viper*

A double torso, joined at the stomach, headless, with four legs and twin vaginas, living in a box in a spider crouch, waiting for human contact. A teenage girl, shoving her arm into a fleshy, tactile rift in a sidewalk. Two costumed tweens, cutting open an amphibian mutant on a fish hook inside a liquid-filled jar, inside the jar, a cautionary book, inside the book.

Body-horror images that would make David Cronenberg sit up and beg inform the work of Hans Rickheit, an infrequently published Pennsylvania-based writer/artist. Always compelling, rarely logical and oftentimes erotically and violently offensive, his bleak yet somehow innocent self-published works are as impossible to describe as a truly disorienting nightmare – and just as disturbing.



"Dreams are at the root of a lot of my work," Rickheit admits, "but they're really just a starting point." He mentions a need to examine personal issues in metaphor, a fascination with the "UnderBrain" (more on this later) and a fondness for "cutting up" as a method of further disorienting – he literally cuts up his scripts and rearranges segments in search of both new meanings and deeper associations.

"My agenda is to probe, poke around, pull up the floorboards and look beneath," he says. "I rarely know what I'm after until I get there."

He won't explain what he was after with his latest (and largest) story, what he calls the "sideways autobiographical graphic novel" *Chloe* (2002), partly because it involves "personal information that [he] cannot make public." But the private details are ultimately unimportant.

"They have a specific meaning for me and me only, and that knowledge is not required [for the reader] in the context of the actual story," says Rickheit, whose next book of all-new material, *Squirrel Machine*, will be released, he hopes, by 2009.

In *Chloe*, the titular teenager is searching the woods for her lost dog when she finds strange air vents placed sporadically within the surrounding fields; inside one, a fungal, gelatinous egg hatches at her touch, making her flee in shock. Farther into the forest, suspended by wires from tree branches are fat, torso-sized, slug-like creatures, one of which is pulled down and carried off by a decrepit dwarf. Deeper still, the dwarf's cabin, where he fillets the creature and swallows its spinal column – whole.



Chloe: *Rummaging through the detritus in the dangerous terrain of the UnderBrain*

Make no mistake, the first fifteen pages of Rickheit's fascinating psychological mindfuck are *Chloe*'s most grounded section. Soon, the girl will see a horde of kittens emerge from a gash in the dwarf's torso and hear inhuman sounds emanating from the vents. It is at the mere suggestion of something lurking below that Rickheit rips out the floor, sending his expressionless heroine into the cabin's impossible basement, which houses a labyrinth inhabited by freakish aberrations, most of them semi-human, sexualized to the extreme of being functional (yes, fuckable) albeit headless. This place is the UnderBrain.

Rickheit allows that the idea of the UnderBrain (his neologism) involves considering "the collective unconsciousness as a two-way relationship" – the almost psychotic, certainly hallucinatory images that it generates need to be both fed and nurtured by the dreamer, and the implied risks of not communing with the UnderBrain include madness and death, and perhaps something much worse.

Without doubt, "something much worse" weaves throughout Rickheit's work. Twinned themes abound, unified in a single, convoluted knot of surreal hell: disease/evolution, sex/death, searching/getting lost, the conscious/the subconscious.

"I did work out what I wanted to work out, personally, with *Chloe*," he allows, "though it's not catharsis but a processing ... I could write happier stories, I suppose, but there wouldn't be conflict, which just wouldn't interest me."

Advance pages from *Squirrel Machine* (named after "an actual, real-life construct that defies purpose") assure conflict and typical Rickheitean confusion: a hillbilly girl eats puss from a diseased cat's scabrous eye and a pipe organ is built from decapitated pig heads.

"My comics aren't really 'horror,'" muses Rickheit. "I don't know if they fit in any existing genre, except maybe 'weirdo'/'surrealist'/'underground.' But if *Rue Morgue*'s readers are into strange work that may damage their brains ..."

More info: chromefetuscomics.com

QUICK CUTS

REVIEWS BY GARY BUTLER, ERIC GRANT, MARK MOYES AND JOVANKA VUCKOVIC.

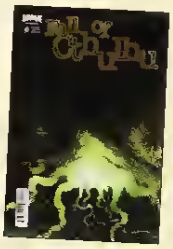


After bouncing between publishers for over two decades, *Dead World* found a resting place last year at Desperado, which exhumed "the original zombie comic" for a new generation. Collecting issues #1-6 of the current run, *Dead World: Requiem for the World* finds wise-crackin', motorcycle-ridin' King Zombie and his army of the undead pursuing a busload of kids in the relentless effort to capture Deake, a key player in Zombie's agenda to bring total destruction to the last of the living. The first two issues are illustrated by series alumnus Vince Locke, with a seamless transition to Croatian artist Dalibor Talajic for the remainder. Writer (and ex-Calibre publisher) Gary Reed crafts a compelling tale about the human factor in a war with intelligent zombies, every bit as good and gory as the original 1985 series. **JV**

When a stupid dare leads to a tragic death, John Kohler Jr. and a handful of other teens living in the isolated mountain town of Elk's Ridge, West Virginia, find out just how far their protective parents will go to keep the horrors of the outside world from invading their safe, secure and locked-down community. *Elk's Run* takes a familiar dystopian set-up and ditches the usual sci-fi gimmicks and "careful what you wish for" morals, instead creating a grim, earthy thriller that pits neighbour against neighbour, father against son, and cold-blooded homicide against mass murder. This edition collects all eight issues of the serial launched in spring 2005 (see *RM#44*), including issues 5-8, which were previously unpublished. **EG**



"Would you breathe the dreams of a God? They taste of the grave." So mutters Abdul Alhazred in the throes of confessional insanity. Some 1300 years later, the mummified body of H.P. Lovecraft's infamous mad sorcerer is dragged up from a bog and resurrected by nameless soldiers of fortune wearing their god-killing agenda on their sleeves. The launch issue of *Fall of Cthulhu* does a good job of setting the scene for its ominous title – and as a "number zero" issue, that job is to tease and cliff-hang. Standout artwork from Jean Dzialowski is reminiscent of John Totleben's *Swamp Thing*, both in the bog (obviously) and the nether realm (less obviously); the Tyler Walpole cover, too – what a fantastic faceful of tuber terror! **GB**



If you're ever driving through the cursed southern Louisiana swampland and hit a raccoon, be afraid of the *Roadkill Zoo*. The jury's out on whether the writing can make zombified woodland creatures truly creepy (the first issue stumbles for being monster-lite) but the art is good enough: Derek Fridolfs' inks eschew a deliberately chaotic or overly dark look in favour of something more precise, full of deep meaty blacks and sharp, craggy shadows that crawl over the characters like arteries. The concept may lack bite at this early stage, but the godlessness is in the artistic details. **MM**



How do you create a definitive vision of an urban legend? You don't – you create options, as does Josh Howard (*Dead@17*) in his mammoth anthology *Sasquatch*. The 250 pages, comprising over twenty stories and 30 creators, cover pretty much every character trait attributable to the creature: humanity, environmentalism, fraud, beastliness, loneliness and, uh, dune-buggy-on-the-mooniness. (To that last one, there are also stories involving Santa, Osama Bin Laden and a team-up with a cop.) Writing leans towards fun over frights, while art vacillates from gory to goofy, and manga to mainstream. My one complaint is the preponderance of cartoony imagery; for example, it would be easier to accept the fact that Bryan Baugh's version looks like Wilford Brimley if we had a counterbalance in the form of an irony-free walking nightmare (though Paul Harmon's offering comes close). **GB**







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The Hollywood Horror Film 1931-1941

Reynold Humphries
Scarecrow Press

In July 1935, a physician named William J. Robinson sent the *New York Times* a letter of protest regarding the recently released film *Mark of the Vampire*. "Several people have come to my notice," he wrote, "who, after seeing that horrible picture, suffered nervous shock, were attacked with insomnia, and those who did fall asleep were tormented by the most horrible nightmares." An oddly furious response, notes writer Reynold Humphries in his new book, *The Hollywood Horror Film 1931-1941: Madness in a Social Landscape*, toward a film with one of the most seemingly inoffensive storylines of the 1930s horror cycle.

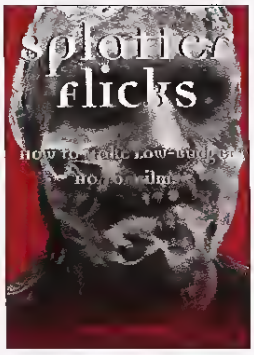
In his scholarly and often illuminating account, Humphries considers not only horror movies themselves but also a selection of the discourses surrounding them, arguing that the reactions they elicited were both socially determined and an expression of repressed desire. Drawing on Marxism and psychoanalysis, he explains that contrary to the standpoint of many previous studies, "class, politics, and history are far more massively repressed within horror and critical discourse thereon than sexuality of whatever persuasion."



He draws evidence from both a comprehensive array of films and an apposite selection of contemporary documents that include memos exchanged between censors and filmmakers, studio publicity materials, professional reviews and public responses. His evaluation of "the revealing glimpse[s] into unconscious fears and prejudices" offered by such documents are among the most absorbing areas of his study, even though his own prejudices occasionally obstruct the objectivity he seeks.

The fascinating perspective offered on the films' representation of class and economics, in addition to gender and sexual orientation, provides a welcome addition to existing studies of the genre. *The Hollywood Horror Film 1931-1941*, for the most part, is compellingly argued, although some interpretations, such as the bold claim that *The Invisible Man* (1933) reveals "what forces were at work to cause the victory of Nazism and the complicity with fascism shown by the international community" are less convincingly proved. Ambitious in its scope and method, Humphries sometimes bites off a little more than he can chew. Nonetheless, for the reader prepared to engage with vaster swathes of psychoanalytic theory than the cover blurb suggests, there are considerable rewards to be found here.

Deborah Allison



BEASTS!

Jacob Covey, ed.
Fantagraphics

Self-described curator Jacob Covey has assembled the ultimate coffee-table book for aficionados of cryptozoology and interpretive art. An 8" x 8" hardcover in beautiful faux antique format (right down to the gold-leaf edges), *BEASTS!. A Pictorial Schedule of Traditional Hidden Creatures* corrals 89 legends both urban and rural, depicting the majority of them alphabetically on full-page, full-bleed plates rendered by an equally diverse group of artists, including Renée French, Tony Millionaire and Richard Sala.

As for the monsters themselves, the gang's all here and then some: the famous, the infamous and the all but unknown rear their uglier-than-thou heads, from Bigfoot to Big Ears, from Cyclops to the hundred-eyed Argus, from the Japanese ghost Gaki to the Jewish automaton Golem. Styles vary from horrific and gore-riffic to absurd and patently comic, making every page turn an adventure for reasons transcending both the obvious and the curious.

The book's greatest achievement, however, is not its admittedly remarkable visual disparity but rather its humanity, as a random sampling of the letter "D" attests. In the process of entrapping a child with the diamond tip of its tentacle, France's shape-shifting sea serpent Drac sports a truly mischievous smile



The Grim Reader

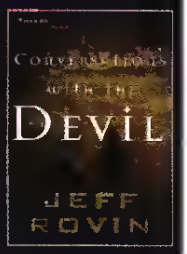
ISIS
Douglas Clegg
Cemetery Dance



Fans of Douglas Clegg's Harrow House books won't want to miss *Isis*, the latest addition to his popular saga. The moving novella recounts the sometimes whimsical and other times bleak childhood of Isis Claviger (before she became entangled with the notorious mansion), and warns of the high price that must be paid when one chooses to raise the dead.

Monica S. Kuebler

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEVIL
Jeff Rovin
Forge



When psychologist Sarah Lynch's teenage patient hangs himself, she investigates. It seems the boy was chatty with the Devil, and "left" for more licentious pastures in hell. Lynch then summons the Devil herself and even though he comes off as somewhat banal and theologically tiresome, she is tempted. But the final showdown is more whimper than bang, making one long for Milton.

Sandra Kasturi

EMILY THE STRANGE: SEEING IS DECEIVING
Rob Reger
Chronicle Books



Everyone's favourite angry little goth girl is back in this quirky book of optical illusions. Rob Reger uses cut-out holes in the pages to create weird images that merge into one another as you flip through. His deliberate play with drawing and deception entices you into Emily's hallucinatory world where things are never quite as they seem. Fanciful, fun and, of course, strange.

Claire Horsnell



Beasts!: *Sam Weber's depiction of the Vampire*

Donestre, Europe's lion-headed man, sits by his victim's decapitated head, on the verge of tears from his renowned (but belated) feelings of remorse. Greenland's cruel and seductive Disemboweller, whose siren-like night calls lure victims to her side to hear jokes so funny that they literally bust a gut, sits blithely between two death-grinning sufferers, exuding a sexual, yet carefree and innocent warfishness. In every case, the reader feels nothing short of complicit.

Plenty of food for thought here, and *BEASTS!* even includes an unnecessary but enjoyable bonus in the form of an interview with an honest-to-gosh Yeti hunter.

Gary Butler

splatter flicks
Sara Caldwell
Allworth Press

Anyone who knows horror movies knows that low-budget splatter flicks are the building blocks of the genre. Cheap, easy and profitable, they're the gateway into the industry for many a rookie filmmaker. So, if you're writing a how-to book on the subject, there's certainly no shortage of experts to talk to or films to cite. Why then is a book called *Splatter Flicks: How to Make Low-Budget Horror Films* referencing *Poltergeist*, *Se7en* and *Jaws* – big-budget non-splatter films? At least those are "horror" flicks, though. It's clear author Sara Caldwell doesn't know her target audience, as she also cites *Jurassic Park*, *Vertigo* and the drama *Eve's Bayou* in her book. WTF?

To be fair, she does have extensive interviews with splatter filmmakers TJ Nordaker (*The Janitor*), director Stevan Mena (*Malevolence*), scream queen Julie Strain, head of the New York City Horror Film Festival Michael Hein and several others who offer genuinely relevant info. But there is also a bloat of off-topic anecdotes and filler from other people in the industry who don't have much, if any, experience making splatter films.

Caldwell spends pages and pages interviewing Larry Fessenden, who, while rather resourceful and insightful, hasn't even made what most horror fans would consider a "splatter flick." By the time you hit the section where a special effects coordinator describes faking a war scene in a parking lot for the TV series *Charmed*, you'll wonder if the author is completely lazy or totally daft.

More likely the former, as the book is shamelessly padded out to 200 pages, including a pointless section containing a handful of bios for filmmakers including Cronenberg and Corman, who aren't mentioned elsewhere in the book to any useful extent. Troma



the Ninth Circle Presents

Making the jump from flash-animated cartoon to illustrated novel, James Farr's *Xombie* phenomenon grows up.

DEAD MAN'S TALE



by Monica S. Kuebler

Just as it was once believed that cable TV would end the reign of movie houses, and video would kill the radio star, so was the fear that the internet would make print media obsolete. But those fears were put to rest after web technology became responsible for the publication of new novels such as David Wellington's *Monster Island* and Chene Priest's *Four and Twenty Blackbirds* – stories originally told in blog format before being picked up for publication based on their online popularity. Add to that list James Farr's *Xombie Dead on Arrival*, which started out as an online Flash animation called *Xombie* (*RM#48*), a project that sprang to life when writer/animator Farr realized he'd never seen an undead hero in contemporary zombie fiction.

"Right then, a little light went on, and the *Xombie* universe gradually began taking shape in my brain," says Farr about his series. "After letting it brew in my head for twelve years or so, and failing to convince a studio to take it on, I decided to try animating it myself on the web."

Despite his limited art background, Farr had been drawing his entire life and his natural tendency towards a cartoonish, exaggerated style actually helped sell the show to a broader audience when it launched on the web in 2002. The universal appeal of the story – one of an intelligent zombie named Dirge and the purple-haired six-year-old girl he rescues (and must protect) from the flesh-hungry masses in a near-future, post-zombie apocalypse world – didn't hurt either. It's all part of Farr's plan to rethink the zombie story.



"*Xombie*'s existence is due largely to my own frustration with the genre," he admits. "I've really tried to bring some new ideas to the table – ideas that I always wanted to see." The new novel, Farr explains, finally allowed him to push boundaries that he couldn't push previously due to the constraints of the Flash format.

"The story has been given the web treatment, which was hugely dictated by my schedule and budget. With the novel, it really allowed me the freedom to cut loose and include elements I'd had to remove for the purposes of animation. Some of the bigger, more interesting ideas suddenly became feasible without the daunting task of having to animate it all."

To this end, *Xombie: Dead on Arrival*, like its animated predecessor, packs several curves for readers used to more typical zombie fare, including a sentient ancient Egyptian mummy with a secret agenda, a zombified pet velociraptor and some mysterious, ultra-violent "aliens" who appear bent on the destruction of humans and "smart" zombies alike.

"I don't know if it fits [into the zombie subgenre] at all, which is generally what I like about it so much," confesses Farr, who's decided to keep the plague and the origin of the "alien" creatures vague in favour of focusing on the human story. "I didn't really have a specific template to follow, so I'm trying to create my own as best I can. I find it almost impossible to write anything without heavy doses of humour, and the material requires ample levity to make it work. I [also] try to use the horror elements to enhance the underlying story, instead of the other way around."

Armed with the knowledge that the tale would continue in comic book form this month from Devil's Due Publishing, Farr was able to tie all the various incarnations of *Xombie* together relatively neatly. And as he has already proven, there are no intentions of wrapping his newly minted franchise anytime soon; discussions are already in the works for *Xombie* snowboards, video games, feature films and more.

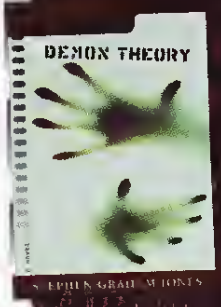
"The *Xombie* universe has evolved into a pretty expansive place," admits Farr, who promises everything will be explained eventually. "The story wasn't something I could cover completely in one book. What I tried to do instead was introduce all the major ideas and doors that could be opened and explored later on."

Learn more at xombified.com



Demon Theory

Stephen Graham Jones
MacAdam Cage



Readers can be forgiven for keeping a cheat sheet to chart the multi-layered mayhem in Stephen Graham Jones' postmodern horror novel *Demon Theory*. Even the short plot synopsis calls for a few geeky file cards: the novel masquerades as a treatment for a fictional film trilogy (called The Devil Inside) that is based on a non-existent novel inspired by the fabricated case notes of Dr. Neider of the Owl Creek Mental Facilities. If that isn't enough to confuse you, hundreds of footnotes connect every plot twist and line of throwaway dialogue to its place in the larger pop-culture universe. Into this puzzle Jones, an English prof at a Texas university, drops a group of clever med students who find themselves trapped in an old house on Halloween.

The final effect, and it won't be to everyone's taste, is like watching at least three versions of a clever but self-consciously conventional horror novel played out on three different TV screens, each with its own director's commentary. Luckily the reader holds the mental DVD remote in this game, so if it all becomes too much, just tune out the footnotes and follow the characters as they are knocked off in creative kill scenes.

For all of its cerebral shenanigans and winks to the reader, the novel's central story, which pits the students against a gargoyle-like creature who may be one of the main characters' father, is surprisingly engrossing. Jones is after something more than the equivalent of a Sudoku puzzle for pop-culture freaks and grad students – he's a committed horror fan who knows that demons, ghosts and monsters have to occasionally scare us. To that end, Jones carefully paces the action and doles out the plot twists to keep the reader guessing about the metaphysical mystery story at the novel's core. He also lays on the gore occasionally, meaning that besides using their brains, readers also get to see some spilled on the page.

James Grainger

gets a mere name drop and Fred Vogel (*August Underground*) – an obvious interview subject for this type of text – does not. Worse, in some sections the author simply advises looking up information on Google (!).

If you're going to do that, use the search engine to find a more useful book on filmmaking. Try, for example, Lajos Egri's *Guide to Dramatic Writing* to really understand character development, Alex Epstein's *Crafty Screenwriting* for excellent practical advice on getting script to screen or hit eBay for Dick Smith's legendary out-of-print *Monster Make-Up Handbook* for effects lessons. Otherwise you may find yourself renting *Eve's Bayou* and taping episodes of *Charmed*. Ugh..

Dave Alexander

Falling Angel

William Hjortsberg
Millipede Press



Be it Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or Brian de Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise*, the tale of a man selling his soul for success, only to realize just how far he's about to fall when the Inferno itself gapes at his feet, is one of horror's most primal tropes. And William Hjortsberg knows exactly how to mine that particular literary hell, as proven by his recently re-released 1978 novel *Falling Angel*.

One slushy Friday the 13th in 1950s New York, private eye Harry Angel gets a call from a lawyer representing silky "businessman" Louis Cyphre. Cyphre wants to track down former crooner Johnny Favorite, who – thanks to a contract they signed early in Favorite's career – owes him "(c)ertain collateral... to be forfeited in the event of his death." Soon, Angel is getting his palm read by a Satan-worshipping debutante and having a taboo interracial affair with a sexy voodoo mambo, all while the dead bodies pile up... fast. The creepy Cyphre also keeps appearing, leading Angel to question the true object of his client's obsession.

Sound familiar? Fans of Alan Parker's 1987 masterpiece *Angel Heart* may think so, but Hjortsberg's criminally undervalued book – originally conceived as a screenplay – is both a confirmation of and departure from that film's well-trod downward path. Yes, the plot wheezes a bit here and there, in order to fully appreciate the pace, you should probably skip right over the cutesy Chick tract word games and overbearing symbolism. Hjortsberg's prose jacks the grue bard, channelling Hemingway-esque levels of curt poetry. Almost 30 years after it was first published, *Falling Angel* still sings like a Nick Cave ballad covered by *The Manchurian Candidate*-era Frank Sinatra.

Millipede Press' new spotlight edition comes complete with a foreword by Ridley Scott, introduction by James Crumley and afterword by the author (plus a fan letter from Stephen King shochorned in at the very back). Fans of noir horror should check out this headlong thrill ride, and not simply because it pretty much set the subgenre template.

Gemma Files







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WARNING!

TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

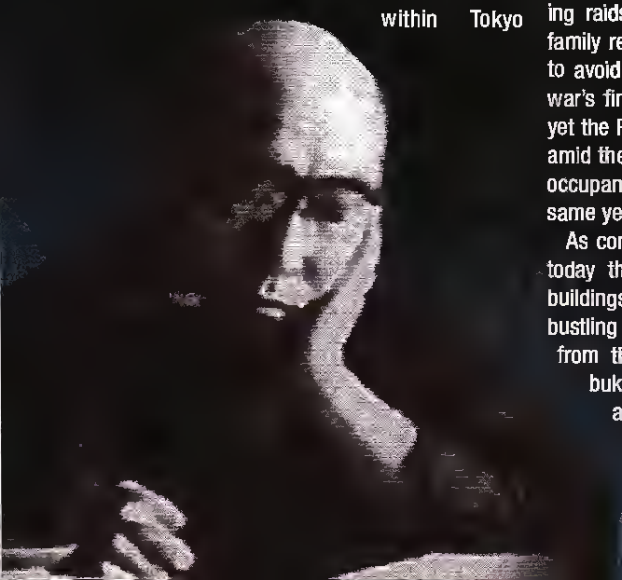
THE EOGAWA RAMPO HOUSE IKEBUKURO – TOKYO, JAPAN

BY TOM MES

Located in the Ikebukuro area of central Tokyo, Rikkyo University is one of Japan's most respected institutions of learning. It also has a place in Japanese horror history. Firstly, for being the alma mater of Kiyoshi Kurosawa (*Kairo*) and secondly, for conserving, on the outskirts of its campus, the home of the country's greatest horror author, Edogawa Rampo (*RM#54*).

Rampo was already an established writer when he moved to Ikebukuro with his wife Ryuko and their son Ryutaro in 1934. He had lived a literal journeyman's life until then, trying his hand at numerous jobs, including reporter, bookseller, noodle peddler and electrician, but failing at most of them. All the while he continued to pursue his literary ambitions, which finally came to fruition in 1923 with the publication of his short story "The Two-Sen Copper Coin" in *Shin Seinen*, Japan's biggest detective and fantasy fiction magazine at the time.

Rampo's wanderings took him around Osaka and to various areas of Tokyo. As with his jobs, he never stayed in the same place for very long; he moved 26 times within Tokyo alone. By the time he settled in Ikebukuro with his family, Rampo's vagabond days were well behind him. He had said farewell to his last sideline – running a lodging house – three years prior and settled down properly when he moved to his new dwellings. Initially renting the place, he bought the property in 1951 and would live there until his death in 1965.



The first few years weren't easy. The militarist regime under Emperor Hirohito became increasingly strict on the arts in the run-up to the Pacific War. Rampo found himself a favourite target of the censors when he wrote "The Caterpillar," a short story about an officer returning from war without limbs, who is at the mercy of his love-starved and begrudging wife. The author's brand of erotic-grotesque fiction sat particularly badly with the authorities, who considered it foreign-influenced decadence. He turned to children's stories and scientific spy yarns in order to save his career during the war.

That the Rampo residence made it through the war unscathed is a minor miracle. Rampo had already dug a bomb shelter in his backyard in late 1943 and in March '45, with Allied bombing raids on Japanese cities intensifying, the family relocated to the countryside just in time to avoid the large-scale bombardments in the war's final months. Ikebukuro was hit heavily, yet the Rampo house was spared, sitting intact amid the rubble of the neighborhood when the occupants returned home in November that same year.

As conspicuous as it may have looked then, today the house is tucked away behind the buildings of the university In what is now a bustling part of town. It's a ten-minute walk from the west exit of the labyrinthine Ikebukuro station, but should you get hungry along the way, it's good to know that the route leads past Sangendo, the author's favourite pastry shop. Here they sell the official Rampo cookie in honour of their most famous client and the shop counter proudly displays a black-and-white photograph of a rather bemused looking Rampo waiting for his order.

At first glance the author's premises will hardly strike anyone as the dwellings of a master of the macabre. A pair of palm trees stand swaying in front of a modest yellow-brick, two-storey house. Even on a winter day the sun shines brightly down upon it. In 2002, Rikkyo University bought the premises from Rampo's son (the name tags of father and son still adorn the entry gate), stepping in after the city council refused to cough up the cash for a much-needed renovation. Toshima ward, of which Ikebukuro is part, decided to play ball after all a year later, declaring it a national monument and paving the way for a full-scale restoration in 2004.

Since then the place has been converted into the Edogawa Rampo Memorial Center for Popular Culture Studies, a fancy name for this humble western-style abode. The front gate is open and the curious can wander around the grounds freely. The entrance to the house itself seems equally welcoming at first, but the passage is blocked by a table on which rests a series of first editions of Rampo's books: *Black Lizard*, *The Gold Mask*, *The Stroller in the Attic* and *The Vampire*. Lurid covers featuring grinning demons and sultry women serve as reminders of their pulp origins, serialized as they were originally in *Shin Seinen* and like-minded publications such as *Grotesque*.

Inside the house, sober wood dominates and decorations are sparse. The living room is officially off limits, but a smile, a bow and a few well-intended words of Japanese from a curious foreign Rampo fan can work wonders (just make sure you take off your shoes!). Entering is, as corny as it may sound, like going through a

time warp. This living room actually looks lived-in, so much so that you would expect Rampo or any other member of the family to walk in at any moment. The room has none of that "life-size display" feeling that characterizes so many of these houses-turned-museums – no crimson ropes cordoning things off, no excessively polished furniture.

The style is late-1940s sobriety, with an Old World feeling. Even in the afternoon it's somewhat dark and dusty, a no-frills décor. In one corner stands Rampo's desk, looking like its owner just slipped out the door for a quick trip to the pastry shop. The mantelpiece carries some of the awards he amassed during his lifetime, including, suitably if somewhat curiously since Rampo never won one, an Edgar (a.k.a. an Edgar Allan Poe award, given annually by the Mystery Writers of America organization), dated 1959. Right above it, a painted portrait of the author stares down gravely.

Aside from a few encyclopedic volumes on Rampo's desk, books are conspicuously absent. It's not that the author didn't keep any, but rather that he had so many of them that he had a separate warehouse built to house his collection. Affectionately known as the kura, or "godown" in its official English translation, this Japanese-style construction stands at the bottom of the garden, measuring roughly the same dimensions as the house. The garden path leads around the house and past the well that served as the entrance to the bomb shelter (now barred, the gaping dark hole immediately evokes Shinya Tsukamoto's magnificent Rampo adaptation, *Gemini*), right up to the solid, vault-like double doors of the warehouse. It too survived war damage, no doubt thanks to its thick walls, now intensively renovated and refortified.

As the heavy doors open, with some effort on the part of the diminutive custodian, it is Rampo's mind that opens up to us. Here is everything that informed his singular world, all his influences. It's a treasure trove of rows upon rows of books, stacked floor to ceiling across two floors, nary an inch of wall still visible. According to our guide, Rampo amassed over 20,000 books and magazines during his lifetime, since he never threw anything away. All of it is neatly archived, though: untranslated foreign literature to the left, Japanese to the right, while the second floor is entirely devoted to works from Japan's feudal Edo era, including some very ancient tomes.

Plead as we may, we are refused entry to the godown, no doubt due to the monetary value of many of the volumes kept inside. We are left to lurk at the doorstep, more than content to have stood in the shadow of one of the greatest figures in Japanese horror history. Not to mention the prospect of getting to savour those Rampo cookies on the way back.

The Edogawa Rampo Memorial Center for Popular Culture Studies is open on Fridays only, from 10:30 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. There is no admission fee, but making an appointment is advisable: rampo@grp.rikko.ne.jp. Fax: 03 3985 4641. No English spoken.







Eerie Edogawa: *(clockwise from bottom) The desk where Rampo wrote, his warehouse containing some 20,000 books and magazines, and a view of its interior. Opposite: The Rampo house exterior and an image of the author in his later years.*







THE GORE-MET MENU

THE GORE-MET WRAPS HIS GREY MATTER AROUND A TRIO OF RETRO VIDEO CHEAPIES FROM CAMP MOTION PICTURES.



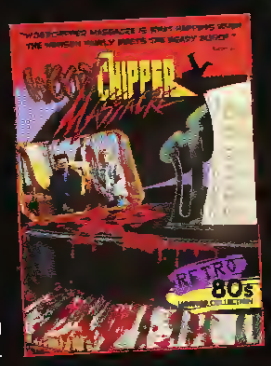
Towards the end of the '80s, video distributors struck minor gold releasing amateur shot-on-video horror films with titles such as *Crazy Fat Ethel 2* (1987), *Redneck Zombies* (1987), *Video Dead* (1987) and *Las Vegas Bloodbat* (1989), which started popping up in the horror sections of local rental stores. The primary selling point of these films was the promise of titties and copious gore. Their packaging was often a stroke job, featuring half-naked women and gory stills not always found in the actual film. Sure, they suffered poor production values (translation: they sucked) but they appealed to my perverse sense of humour, so I rented them anyway. Besides, somebody had to love them. It was so long ago…



Camp Motion Pictures is the latest in the El Independent Cinema stable of specialty labels. Their Retro '80s Horror Collection promises that "The Awesome '80s Are Back Again!" and they're taking us down memory lane with full-blown special editions of some of the most dreadful slices of cinematic history.

Cannibal Campout (1988) is an early shot-on-video feature that gained a degree of notoriety for a scene in which a fetus is cut out of its mother and eaten by a couple of redneck cannibals. I remember trading for a VHS dupe of it after being unable to get my hands on the original, just so I could see that particular scene, but the copy I got was so terrible I never bothered watching the whole thing. It turns out that this is actually better than a film shot with a consumer-grade camcorder has any right to be.

Plot? Four teens go camping and wind up as fodder for a trio of backwoods-dwelling brothers with a taste for human flesh. The camera work is unusually interesting and first-time director Jon McBride put a lot of effort into editing down some 30 hours of footage into a reasonably paced 87-minute feature. The DIY gore effects, which include the fetus-munching scene, a gnarly hatchet to the face and some gooey disembowelling, are charmingly cheap and effective.



Woodchipper Massacre (1988) is McBride's second film. It faked me out when I first ran across it because it fails to live up to its awesome title by leaving out the massacre. It stars McBride as the scion of a well-to-do suburban family who suffers a visit from irascible and domineering Aunt Tess when dad goes on a business trip. Tess hates horror movies, '80s rock 'n' roll, survival knives and, well, fun. When little Tom (Tom Casiello) accidentally stabs Tess with his deluxe Rambo knife, the children cover it up by freezing her body and running it through a woodchipper! Then Tess' estranged, psycho son shows up looking for her. McBride ditches the gore of his first film for black comedy, which the cast delivers in arch performances. The audience snoozes.



Ghoul School (1990) could have been picked out of the dumpster behind Troma Studios. Two thugs kill a drunken janitor in the basement of a high school – while hunting for an unnamed commodity that will make them rich – and unleash something into the school water supply that turns the swim team into blue-faced demon zombies. Two horror nerds watching a gore film in an A/V room and a trio of cheesy metalheads practicing for a concert in the school auditorium must join forces to escape the ensuing mayhem.

This is *Demons* on a school lunch budget, with moments of mind-boggling ineptness that make for unintentional laughs. Joe Franklin and Howard Stern regular Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling appear in pointless cameos, and the "band" members are hopelessly incapable of miming with their instruments (check out the guitarist shredding furiously after the music has stopped!). Thankfully, there are enough cheap gore gags to make this one worthwhile. The swim team coach getting his legs pulled off is a real thigh slapper!

Each disc is loaded with extras, which begs the question: *why?*

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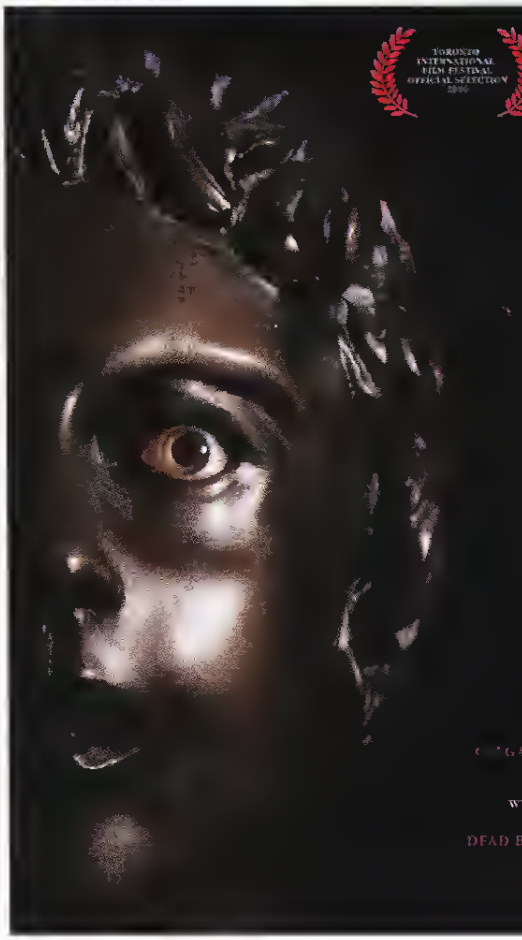
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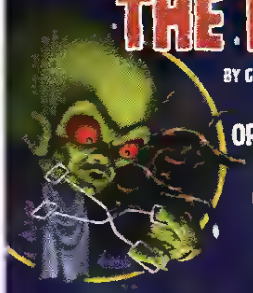


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AUDIO DROME

REVIEWS BY BRETT BAKKER, KEITH CARMAN, AARON VON LUPTON AND MARK R. HASAN



SPASMO **Soundtrack**
Ennio Morricone
DIGITMOVIES
Umberto Lenzi's nutbar giallo survives as a cult favourite on DVD, bolstered by its weird poster art (what's with the screaming blue tit?) and gorgeous score. Ennio Morricone contrasts another warm lullaby theme (here contemporized with soothing vocal timbres) with weird, dissonant experimentalism and a dominant dual harpsichord spread across the impeccable stereo image. *Spasmo* isn't as harmonically deranged as *Cold Eyes of Fear*, and the album's 40-minute length unfolds as a natural, well-paced tone poem of grace and mounting surrealness. Crisp orchestrations, subtle electronic effects, an elegant organ and a rock beat are typical of the composer's post-*Cat o' Nine Tails* output, and DigitMovies' CD adds several alternate cuts not present on prior RCA releases, including a single version of the main theme. The perfect soundscape for a wonky cinematic treasure. **MRH** ☠☠☠☠



POULTRYGEIST **Soundtrack**
Various
TROMA
Troma's brand of blood, guts and irreverent humour has been wearing a little thin of late, but *Poultrygeist* looks to be the best thing the company has produced since *Terror Firmer*. As an accompaniment comes this massive album of music from and inspired by the film, including the ubercatchy title track performed by Calamari Safari. Any song with the chorus, "You'll be eaten alive by zombie chickens tonight!" is an instant classic in our book. Just like any Troma DVD, the album is loaded with crap, but there are still enough gems from the likes of Zombina and the Skeletones, Impaler and The Nihilistics to make it worthwhile. This soundtrack clearly puts the emphasis on quantity, with a total of 31 tracks and a bonus DVD featuring the first five minutes of the film, behind-the-scenes special effects work, studio footage of *Poultrygeist*'s original song recordings, previews of other Troma efforts and more. Plucking awesome indeed. **AVL** ☠☠☠1/2



L'IGUANA DALLA LINGUA DI FUOCO **Soundtrack**
Stelvio Cipriani
DIGITMOVIES
The movie may not be available on DVD, but music from Riccardo Freda's gruesome giallo finally gets a premiere release, enhanced with a graphically illustrated booklet. Fans of Stelvio Cipriani can easily trace a few intro bars and some thematic snippets to his scores for *Death Walks on High Heels* and *Bay of Blood*, but the main theme for *Iguana with the Tongue of Fire* is one of his best, particularly in the short source cue "Night Club," performed by the composer on piano, accompanied by a female vocalist. The gentility of the theme isn't strained or satirical, and it works as an excellent counterbalance to harsh, dramatic cuts, such as "Intrusione." DigitMovies' flawless CD includes two alternate cues, and while the score is still mostly idiomatic theme variations, the mercurial shifts from sweetness to shock will keep listeners on their toes. **MRH** ☠☠☠☠



CINEMUSIC **Soundtrack**
Chuck Cirino
BSX RECORDS
Chuck Cirino has been around the block several times in the world of low-budget horror, sci-fi and exploitation films, essentially serving as director Jim Wynorski's right-hand music man, scoring *Chopping Mall* and *Not of this Earth*, among others. His relationship with Wynorski continues with this soundtrack to three Sci-Fi Channel features: *AI Assault*, *Komodo Vs. Cobra* and *Solar Attack*. It's probably not a huge stretch to surmise that these films aren't very good, and unfortunately, the music doesn't do much either. Tracks from *AI Assault* concentrate on mechanical noises and standard action cues, while *Komodo*'s score works in monstrous roars for a cheap, pseudo-epic *Jurassic Park* vibe. Songs off of *Solar Attack* are the most memorable for their tension-building, epic battle theme, but that's not saying much. Though not awful, Cirino's scores don't rise above the movies they were made for, and considering the Sci-Fi Channel's less than impressive reputation, that's not a good thing. **AVL** ☠☠

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PAN'S LABYRINTH **Soundtrack**
Javier Navarrete
MILAN RECORDS
Having also scored *In a Glass Cage* and Guillermo del Toro's *Devil's Backbone*, Javier Navarrete has now crafted a grand orchestral journey that perfectly captures *Pan*'s mythic and horrific elements. A gentle children's lullaby is the score's anchor, yet Navarrete employs plenty of variation and unresolved harmonics – the latter quite reminiscent of Howard Shore's chilling music for David Cronenberg's films. Cues such as "Deep Forest" come close to an operatic style, but the composer frequently recedes and shifts to subtle moments, teasing the listener before returning to eloquent orchestral surges coloured by religious-styled chorals. "Vals of the Mandrake" adds a lilting waltz, while "The Funeral" emphases intimate piano set against tear-inducing strings. It's an exceptionally crafted symphony of nightmarish tragedy. **MRH** ☠☠☠☠☠



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IMPIOUS — Death Metal

Holy Murder Masquerade

METAL BLADE



Putting a new twist on the concept album, Scandinavian death metallers Impious release *Holy Murder Masquerade*, an effort that eschews typical mystical fodder for the tale of an insane loner hell-bent on destroying his own bloodline. The resulting eleven "chapters" in the story follow a nameless crusader as he chops, hacks and strangulates his way through the family tree to the soundtrack of raging beats, thunderous guitars and primal vocal growls. Enhanced by a graphic novel that enables listeners to follow along, this overtly aggressive and technically proficient affair may be epic but its brutality and twisted deliberateness – both musically and as a story – are ingenious.

KC ☠☠☠☠



REST STOP — Soundtrack

Bear McCready

ELEMENT 1/PLAN R SOUNDTRACKS

Bear McCready (*Battlestar Galactica*) ventures into horror terrain with an atypical melodic approach to the old tale of sadism off a dusty highway. The album's opening vocal cut establishes the soothing, humanistic theme that really grounds the score as a character-based work. In it, McCready uses dissonance and percussion clusters in mounting rhythmic peaks instead of cheap shock stabs to jolt the listener, but what really distinguishes the score is his retro design. McCready incorporates '80s synth ("Plea for Death") and a late '70s electric bass groove paired with metallic blues riffs in standout tracks "Trapped" and "Searing Heat." Beautifully engineered and orchestrated, the score's wickedly tongue-in-cheek dramatic peaks are often separated by swathes of gentle harmonics, and although some cues are admittedly brief, this is a nice portrait of sweaty terror under a baking desert sun. **MRH** ☠☠☠☠



NEKROMANTIX — Psychobilly

Life is a Grave & I Dig It!

HELLCAT RECORDS

For anyone introduced to the Nekromantix on their Hellcat debut *Return of the Loving Dead* (2002), the departure of Peter Sandorff (guitar/vocals) and Kristian Sandorff (drums) is immediately apparent on *Life is a Grave & I Dig It!* The sound has undergone a pretty drastic transmutation: gone is the palette of layered sounds that ranged from metal-billy to surf, replaced with a stripped-down (no overdubs this time), less atmospheric approach. The album recalls early Nekromantix material, such as *Hellbound* (1989) and *Curse of the Coffin* (1991), yet still treads unfamiliar territory with the doo-wop inspired "Anaheim After Dark" and twangy country tune "Fantazma." If you ever wondered just how Kim Nekroman and his wife Patricia Day of Horrorpops knock creepers, he tells all on the cheeky "Horny in a Hearse." Not the best work of this seminal band, but still miles above the heap of psychobilly imitators. **BB** ☠☠☠1/2



LONESOME KINGS — Psychobilly

Sweet Little Succubus

ROCKIN' RAVEN RECORDS

Like a kick in the teeth and a knife in your gut, Lonesome Kings know how to dish out the skull-pounding psychobilly, and though they shuffled off this mortal coil some time ago (the band, that is), here are four more tracks to kick your ass. Pressed on yummy cherry-red vinyl, this 7-inch EP begins with a remix of "Sweet Little Succubus" (from 2003's *Shotgun Full of Blues*), which is followed by the thick and hard-hitting "Watchin' You" (from 2006's *Legendary Suffering*). Now flip that sucker over for a cover of Blag Dahlia's "Let's Take a Ride," and the sleazy moaner "Let Me Die." Not enough original material here to make it essential, but *Sweet Little Succubus* is still a sweet little package complete with killer artwork and all the dark and evil perversion you'd expect from a Lonesome Kings' lyric sheet.

AVL ☠☠☠☠



GORGUTS — Metal

Considered Dead/
The Erosion Of Sanity

ROADRUNNER

Underrated and overlooked, Quebecois behemoths Gorguts were already a little late to the death metal dinner table when their debut *Considered Dead* (1991) and sophomore effort *The Erosion of Sanity* (1993) hit the scene. Thick and pummelling, the quartet's rancid amalgamation of Obituary's plodding growl, Entombed's thunderous backbone and Cannibal Corpse's penchant for all things disgusting was energetic, furious and quite imposing. Gorguts also proved that every song did not have to be played at blastbeat speed to retain a bleak atmosphere and lingering sense of doom. Now, Roadrunner has re-released both albums in Digipak format with bonus demo cuts. *Considered Dead* finds the band still plotting its method of attack, somewhat unable to pare down the youthful vigour on cuts such as "Stiff And Cold" and "Hematological Allergy," while the more patient and organized fury of *The Erosion of Sanity* spawned stronger tracks such as "Hideous Infirmity" and "Condemned To Obscurity." Definitive and enduring, these discs are integral to fully appreciating the tormented twist death metal took in its formative years. **KC** ☠☠☠1/2

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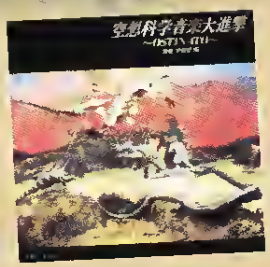


Godzilla music aficionado LARRY TUCZYNSKI takes us inside his massive kaiju catalogue. Meet the...

KING OF THE MONSTER MUSIC COLLECTORS

by Mark R. Hasan

A larger-than-life monster inspires larger-than-life music, so it only makes sense that collecting the soundtracks to *Godzilla*'s exploits would require a larger-than-life appetite. Enter Larry Tuczynski, whose insatiable hunger for monster movie music began when he saw the film during its original North American theatrical run



"There was always something different about *Godzilla* when compared to other movies of the time," Tuczynski explains. In spite of recognizing the monster as an actor in a rubber suit, he also recognized the film's allegory "about mankind destroying itself, and Godzilla sometimes being a form of punishment."

In the half-century that followed *Godzilla*'s initial release, the Toho company continued to produce its iconic monster films, and Tuczynski, whose baby steps as a mega-collector began at age twelve, amassed an impressive collection of albums from various musical genres.

By the mid-'80s, he owned more than 4000 LPs, yet it was a fateful trip to New York City that shifted his attention to Japanese imports of the monster music he loved as a youth but could never find on LP. This discovery inspired him to completely refocus his collection.



He managed to sell off the bulk of his LPs when the format still had some resale value, and set about building the exhaustive website Godzilla and Other Monster Music (godzillamonstermusic.com). Devoted to Japanese monster CDs, it's a massive resource for fans, with exact release specs, cover art and English translations of the Japanese-only liner notes (paid for by Tuczynski himself), which previously obfuscated the identity of score cues for frustrated collectors.

"Once I bought those first few CDs, I was bitten by the collecting bug and just had to have every *Godzilla* soundtrack," confesses Tuczynski. "Thanks to the internet and my website, I was able to find places where I could obtain them. Of course, this opened up a whole can of worms, leading to many other Japanese discs, such as soundtracks to *Gamera*, *Mothra*, *Ultraman* [and] *Spaceship Yamato*."



Tuczynski's ever-expanding website currently catalogues more than 700 CDs. Among box sets, limited releases, and reissues, the rarest item is a *Godzilla vs. Destroyer* 3" promo CD that forms part of a keychain, containing three tracks of music and sound effects. Another CD, *Godzilla 1985*, set Tuczynski back $100.

"Not only was it hard to find and expensive, it's not even among my favourites," he says of the item. "I guess if I had to pick a most special one, it would be the first one I ever found and loved, which would be the soundtrack to *Godzilla vs The Thing*."

That 1964 film, which gave Mothra its screen debut, featured singing twin sisters known as The Peanuts. Tuczynski explains that the pair's voices and melodies were particularly striking, inspiring him to seek out their other non-monster movie work and even devote a portion of his website to their music.

While that one may be his favourite, the most important monster score for Tuczynski remains Akira Ifukube's *Godzilla* (1954), which set his life of collecting in motion all those years ago. *The 50th Anniversary Godzilla Soundtrack Perfect Collection* is another must-have, he explains.

"This was supposed to be all the *Godzilla* films redone into six box sets with bonus materials. So far, only four of the six have come out and the last one came out well over a year after its scheduled release. The last two may never come out, and it's a shame, because they are wonderful sets and give fans a chance to get material long out of print."

Aside from their high prices, the rarity of Japanese CDs is perhaps the biggest hurdle for any fan wanting to start a monster soundtrack collection. Tuczynski often tells the inquisitive: "Based on my many years of experience, if you can get a CD you want, grab it now, because you may never get another chance. These CDs go out of print rapidly, and once they are gone, get harder and harder to find."

PLAY DEAD

GRAPHICS PLAYABILITY SHIVERS

HIGHEST RATING IS THREE.

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE



MONSTERS MENACE AMERICA

Board Game

Avalon Hill

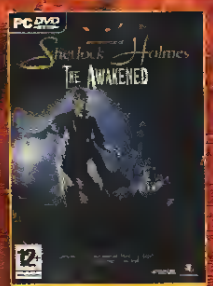
Being a giant monster is pret-ty sweet. You get to stomp on tanks, swat fighter jets out of the sky and munch on the odd nuclear reactor. But every once in a while a new monster shows up and you've got to put down the tree you were using to pick soldiers out of your teeth and go kick some abominable ass.

In *Monsters Menace America*, two to four players select a beast to control – such as Konk the giant gorilla or Zorb the menacing eyeball – as well as a group of military combat forces, used against opposing monsters.

Utilizing a huge gaming board, simple rules and beautifully crafted game pieces, players stomp important landmarks from The Alamo to Graceland to gain infamy points, which help in attacks while crushing Roswell or Three Mile Island, places that earn you mutation powers (laser beam eyes, armoured scales, etc.). But beware of enemy military units that may use molecular cannons, laser satellites or the infamous "blonde babe" to take down your creature's health points. Hilariously, if your monster's health drops to zero, it doesn't die; instead it moves to Hollywood where it becomes a tawdry tourist attraction until it gains enough health to go back on a rampage.

Lighthearted and loads of fun, this game continues until the twentieth city is reduced to rubble, then the monsters battle each other – claw vs. tentacle – and a winner is declared. Then it's off to eat Disney World!





THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE AWAKENED

PC

Focus Home Interactive

Sometimes it's nice to put down the chainsaw and head into a game armed only with your big fat intellect. *The Awakened* is just such a game, requiring brains over brawn – and what better brain to use than that of Sherlock Holmes?

The year is 1894 and Scotland Yard's best is asked to investigate a number of mysterious disappearances, which turns up an underground cult of Cthulhu worshippers. As you proceed, the game immerses you in a slow-paced tale set in masterfully rendered 3-D environments of London's foggy alleys, a mountainous Swiss mental hospital and the swampy bayous of New Orleans – all complemented by inspired voice acting, some good scares and a creepy soundtrack.

It's fascinating to pit Holmes' analytical mind against such terrifying monsters. In fact... it's elementary, my dear shoggoth!



LIBER NECRIS: THE BOOK OF DEATH IN THE OLD WORLD

RPG sourcebook

Black Library Publishing

A sourcebook for *Warhammer* gamers, *Liber Necris* is like peering into an ancient tome detailing the sordid history of the vampire.

Written from the perspective of the vampire Lord Mannfred von Carstein, it describes the black art of necromancy and records the horrible rise of the blood drinker. Each of the book's 96 full-colour pages looks as though it was printed on human skin and penned in blood, while the many stunning illustrations appear as testaments to abominations that we mortals were never meant to see.

Though *Warhammer* enthusiasts will notice that much of the content is from the company's previous releases, there's still a lot of new info to be gleaned from the painstakingly detailed pages. It's a most desirable tool to help intensify your storytelling, game play and general vampire awareness.

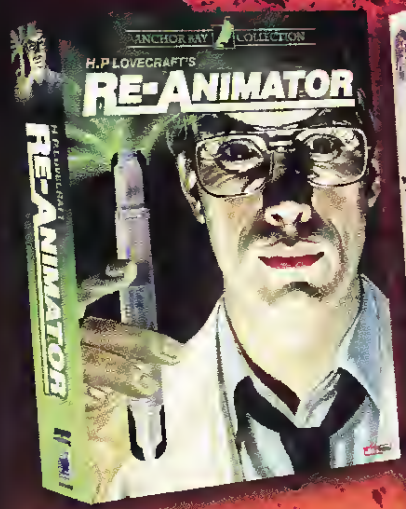

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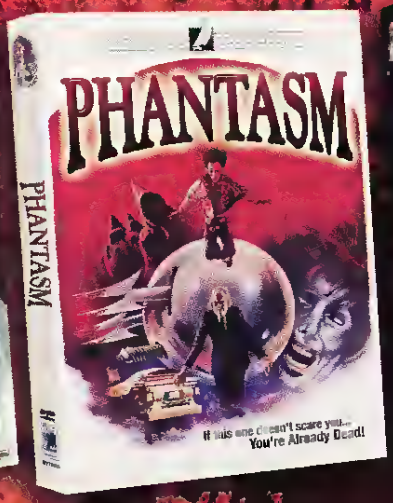
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Classic Cut Presents

BLOOD FEAST



HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS
USA – 1963

Gackling sex, drugs, white slavery and other "adults only" taboos, exploitation films first appeared in the 1920s and '30s to cater to topics that big Hollywood studios wouldn't – and often couldn't – cover. Though flesh-baring nature camp travelogues and venereal disease documentaries were still the dominant exploitation attractions in the 1960s, many fly-by-night filmmakers felt the constant legal hassles over portraying onscreen nudity ultimately weren't worth the effort. Looking for a bankable alternative to the skin flick game, it was producer David F. Friedman and director Herschell Gordon Lewis (working from a screenplay by Allison Louise Downe) who first cunningly traded sex for slaughter, painting theatre screens red with a deliriously bloody gore film that mapped out the future of grindhouse horror.

Even before *Blood Feast*'s oozing title card appeared, Friedman and Lewis went straight for the jugular, shocking unsuspecting viewers with a bold opening sequence of a machete-wielding maniac attacking a screaming girl in a bathtub. Leeringly photographed in colour, the killer carefully gouges out an eyeball and holds it up like a trophy before slicing off his victim's leg. It's the first heinous murder by Fuad Ramses (Mal Arnold), a club-footed, deranged Egyptian caterer hired to supply the food for a WASPy suburban soiree.

Without the host's knowledge, Ramses plans to recreate a 5000-year-old ceremony known as the Feast of Ishtar, featuring a buffet made up of the dismembered limbs of local virgins. Pursued by a none-too-bright police detective (William Kerwin), Ramses has the entire town in a panic as he collects the remaining ingredients he needs for his gruesome gourmet meal.

Shot for a mere $24,000, *Blood Feast* is amateur by most filmmaking standards, with rushed camera work, crudely staged effects and excruciating acting, but its ballsy, groundbreaking approach to cinematic bloodshed has made it an undisputed horror classic. While Hitchcock used deceptive editing to create disturbing results just three years earlier in *Psycho*, Friedman and Lewis were not interested in subtlety, instead spilling eight gallons of stage blood over their actors and makeshift sets to push the gore factor as far over the top as possible. Strangely enough, the film's Grand Guignol-inspired atrocities have become just as memorable as Hitchcock's Bates Motel shower set piece (at least among gorehounds), as one woman is discovered on an altar dripping with grue, stray body parts are cooked in a pizza oven and a girl's tongue is ripped out in graphic detail.



Although scenes of death and dismemberment were undercut with a mischievous streak of humour, critics weren't interested in picking up on the film's cheeky joke. Newspaper reviews blasted *Blood Feast* for being "abominable," "totally inept" and "a blot on the American film industry," but the maverick filmmakers knew those opinions would be largely irrelevant in the face of a cagey marketing campaign. With lurid poster art, a trailer that warned children and those with heart conditions to leave the theatre during the preview, plus promotional vomit bags that bragged, "You May Need This When You See *Blood Feast*," the film became an immediate hit, breaking drive-in records and packing in viewers during its six-month run on 42nd Street.

Realizing they had tapped into a brand-new market, Friedman and Lewis used their surprise success to launch increasingly daring films such as *Two Thousand Maniacs!* and *Color Me Blood Red*, a ploy that was quickly copied by noted sleaze merchants Ted V. Mikels and Andy Milligan. Still, it's *Blood Feast* that is most remembered today for pioneering a gore aesthetic that has virtually come to define the modern fright film. Not only did the movie pave the way for respected genre directors like George A. Romero and Wes Craven to fully realize their horrific visions, it took the first steps towards demystifying the taboo itself, which allowed explicit death scenes to evolve from the dingy grindhouse circuit to today's multiplexes. Few of these contemporary Hollywood films have ever matched the sheer crimson carnality of *Blood Feast*, however, making Friedman and Lewis not only the godfathers of gore, but arguably still the reigning kings.

Paul Corupe



Blood Feast: *H.G. Lewis' pioneering gore movie has come to define the modern fright film.*

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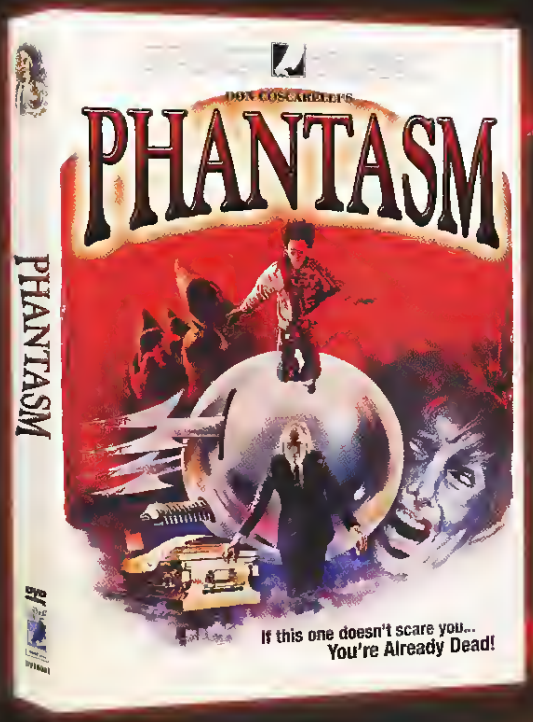
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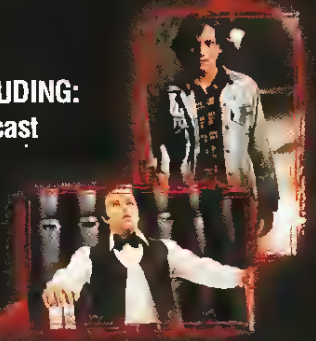
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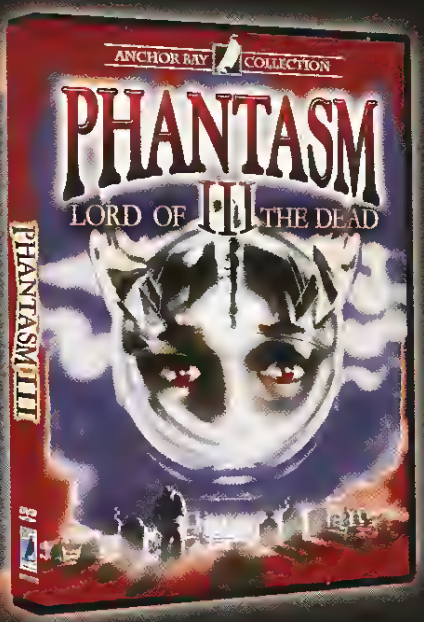
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